

# **PEOPLE'S WAR AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN NEPAL**



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## Publisher's Note

Through a number of movements and revolutions, beyond any blemish it is now repeatedly proved that women for their liberation do not need any condescending saviours, including NGOs. What they really need is a correct ideology to lead them and a Communist Party for its correct application. Today, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism [M-L-M] is the only ideology, which can lead a true Women's Liberation Movement. Of course, a correct application of M-L-M is directly related with the correct understanding and realisation of this ideology. That's why, it has now become an imperative for a Party which truly and honestly aspires for the Liberation of Women to acknowledge, realise and correctly apply M-L-M in accordance with the concrete situation of that country. And to do that, a Maoist Party should – rather, must – initiate, and/or continue, or to prepare to launch People's War in a sincere way. People's War is not simply an armed struggle, but a total war against the ruling classes – though no doubt, a number of tactics are involved in it. Hence, in Maoism there is no space for resistance war. And a total war is a war against imperialism and other ruling classes not only at the level of militarily fighting, but it also encompasses all the aspects of human life. Moreover, universally the very basic and primary task and duty of a Maoist Party of a particular country is to apply M-L-M in its concrete situation and if it fails to do so, it may have the name of a Communist Party, but in essence, it ceases to be a Communist Party. It would be nothing but foolish expectation to have anything positive in the direction of Women's Liberation from such a revisionist – in other words, a reactionary Party.

The development of scientific understanding in the Communist Movement for the Women's Liberation took a long way. First time in the world, *Paris Commune* had shown the enormous extent of intensity of the fury and hatred of women, particularly of working class women, against all types of suppression and oppression. But in practical sense, it got the actual start off from *October Revolution*, when through a series of debates within the International Communist Movement on this particular question and also through a series of trial and error methods adopted by the Bolsheviks, the hope of Women's Liberation was indeed kindled up. At that time, genuine Communists, on one hand, were truly trying to understand the gravity and complexities of this question, and on the other hand, particularly in the USSR, they were trying to resolve this question in practice. They had identified that women's question cannot be really resolved without ensuring the socio-economic-cultural freedom and security of not only the women, but also that of children and dependent aged people – according to the existing social norm, whom the women are principally responsible to look after. It was also identified that the Liberation of Men and Women cannot be mechanically separated – if one is not liberated, the other part of the

humanity cannot be liberated. And to achieve that, hitting at the base of exploitation and oppression by both men and women together is a must. Comrade Mao Tsetung had tried to put into practice these lessons, even in the days of Yanan. During the time of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, he along with Comrade Chiang Ching and Comrade Chang Chun-chiao could apply them in a more developed way. But in later period, in this regard a mechanical thinking had cropped up within the Communist Movement: putting down all other aspects of Revolution, the task of a Communist Party was confined only to the seizure of political power. The meta-physical thinkers/practitioners, as well as the revisionists, had got a favourable condition that developed due to ferocity of the Second World War to ignore, or to over-rule the aspects of Women's Liberation, or to convert them into some insignificant side-activities. Debates and discussions to resolve the complicated problems related with the Women's Liberation were almost ceased, but 8th March was celebrated practically with a kind of religious fervour.

With the resurgence of the Maoist Movement, particularly with the development of Maoist Movement in Peru under the leadership of Communist Party of Peru [PCP], the women's question again came to the forefront. For the first time in the whole of world, PCP has not only identified Maoism as the third and so far the most advanced stage of Marxism-Leninism, it also played a pioneering role to handle the question of Women's Liberation, particularly in a semi-feudal condition. The fact, that the majority of the Central Committee members of PCP were women, is only a mark of its success in this regard.

Communist Party of Iran (M-L-M) has also contributed seriously to this question. In a semi-feudal country, where the most obnoxiously oppressive fundamentalists are ruling, official sanctioning and propagating and implementing the right to give birth of a child would depend upon its mother – not on father, or anybody else – is a pointer that describes this Party's determination to take up the question of Women's Liberation in relation with People's War.

Unfortunately, in Indian Communist Movement, right from the beginning there is a persistent weakness in encouraging debates and discussions on the complexities and volume of the problems related with the questions of Women's Liberation. Of course, with the development of Maoist Movement after the Naxalbari Struggle, there is a significant shift in this regard from the earlier position of peaceful, defensive position to handle this question to actively offensive position. Now, women are even taking part – and taking part in significant numbers – as combatants in the war against the ruling classes and their armed forces. Yet, one has to acknowledge that the debates and discussions on this issue have to go beyond its present skinny level. Otherwise, mere adoption of some practical steps – in spite of their correctness – only strengthens pragmatism, and weakens M-L-M, and in turn that would hide what Comrade Lenin had defined as, "philistine-intellectual-peasant" approach towards the Women's Liberation question. In addition, it is a well-known fact that such a trend is having a very deep root in the Indian Communist Movement.

Nepalese Revolution had taken a cue from the achievements of PCP not only in its ideological and military activities, but in other aspects of People's War too. Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)] could successfully apply M-L-M in its concrete situation. As a result, within a short span of time CPN (M) could develop base areas and People's Liberation Army [PLA] of six divisions. More than 80% of the geographical area of the country – in other words, the rural Nepal – came under its rule. And almost within a few years, it became one of the major national Parties of the country. Its anti-monarchy and pro-republic movement has become so intense that, now, even the comprador parliamentary parties, till recently who were ardently supporting the monarchy, have had to come into the terms with CPN (M) in anti-monarchy and pro-republic movement. Obviously, they are not doing it out of volition – they are doing it out of their compulsion just to maintain their very existence at present and for the survival of imperialism and Indian expansionism in Nepal. They are waiting for their turn in playing their role to smash PLA and CPN (M).

In its endeavour to present success, CPN (M) has had to give due importance in accordance with M-L-M to women's question, caste and nationality question. Breaking the old geographical divisions, CPN (M) has formed the People's governments based on nationalities. And model villages are established where women's democratic rights are practiced. CPN (M) had established a *Women's Department* to handle the women's questions on the basis of their theoretical and ideological perspective. The present author was the in-charge of this *Women's Department*, which is not functioning now.

Comrade Hisila Yami, popularly known as Comrade Parvati, has written these articles over a long period. These articles were already published in different national and international journals and periodicals. This book is only a collection of these writings. We think, one will appreciate her lucid style backed by down-to-the-earth understanding of M-L-M and its application on women's issues. In fact, in a simple language, but in an ideologically sound way, she has narrated a historical account of how People's War has played and still is playing an indispensable role in liberating the Nepalese women from the clutches of feudalism and other reactions.

We feel that this book will provide the revolutionary masses all over the world, who are serious in participating, or supporting, or making grounds for People's War with the perspective of Women's Liberation as an integral part of Revolution, enough practical, as well as theoretical, materials and lessons to think as well as to put them into practice. To deny the history-making achievements of CPN (M), if somebody at all is trying to ignore, or to devalue the rich experiences of CPN (M) with some frivolous arguments – like the geographical and demographic size of Nepal, about the comparative military strength of its ruling classes, its sociological situation and so on – a Maoist must be alarmed and should out rightly refute the very basic evil intention and ideology behind this kind of arguments. It is very much plausible that after reading this book, one may agree to chant the slogan given by



*Revolutionary Internationalist Movement [RIM]: "Look at the Himalayas, A Better World's Taking Birth!" [CPN (M) is a participant member of RIM.]*

There are many similarities between India and Nepal, not only because of the geographical fact that these two countries are neighbouring countries. Both the countries are semi-feudal and semi-colonial; both the countries are multinational, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, caste-ridden and poor countries. In both the cases, caste-system is anchoring for the sustained feudal relationship. Most importantly, both the countries are passing through the period of People's War and through CCOMPOSA, Maoist Parties of both the countries could establish the mutual relationship between them. By no means, does it mean that everything is same for both the countries. There are two distinct differences – one, till yesterday Nepal was having the monarchy; and two, under the supervision of imperialist forces, Indian expansionism is playing the role of a big brother in South Asia and Nepal is one of the victims of it. Yet, we think, Indian Maoists have many things to learn to develop their understanding regarding women's question and to deal with it from the experiences of CPN (M). Moreover, these experiences were achieved at the cost of martyrdom and self-sacrifices and through the blood and sweat of number of women-Comrades of Nepal, mostly of whom came from the most downtrodden class of the world. Hence, we think, this book will find its importance and usefulness, particularly among the Indian Maoists.

■ ■ ■

Undoubtedly publishing a book is a socialised production, where right from the author to compositor, printing workers, binding-workers, et al. and many other direct and indirect friends and well-wishers, as well as readers are responsible to make it a success. Let us thank them all. Yet a particular mention has to be made about a very young promising student, Ms. Astha, who meticulously and spiritedly did the editing-work of this book.

We are specially thankful to Comrade Prchanda, Chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), for writing the preface for this book.

We are indebted to a number of friends without whom the publication of this book was not possible. Likewise, we have got all the photographs from different friends – most of them wanted to be unnamed. We are simply overwhelmed by their dedication to the cause of Xayvolution. Yet we cannot restrain ourselves to offer our gratitude to Ms. Doualy Xaykao of NPR News whose one snap we have used as front cover.

# FOREWORD

One of the main reasons behind the invincibility of Nepalese People's War is the massive participation of working women in this great movement. Without the participation of women, who have been suffering under the double oppression of gender and class, no revolutionary movement in this world has succeeded nor will succeed in future. It is on the basis of this objective and scientific truth that the glorious vanguard of Nepalese proletariat class, CPN (Maoist), has been seriously, consciously and in a planned way carrying forward its work amongst the women. The continuous development of People's War is based on this incredible result achieved as a result of this conscious effort. The sacrifice and commitment shown by the Nepalese working women during the ten years of great People's War has compelled the Party to arrive at new syntheses whereby women's leadership needs to be developed not only to complete revolution but also to prevent counter-revolution in near future.

There have been very little propaganda or knowledge on multi-dimensional aspect of women's massive participation in People's War at the international level. Hisila Yami (Comrade Parvati) has been fulfilling important contributions in bridging this gap by being part of central policy making body within the Party. It is hoped that this collection of her old and new articles, highlighting various aspect of women's participation in People's War, will serve this purpose. I believe that this collection will play an important role in mobilizing international support in favour of Nepalese People's War. I would like to thank Comrade Hisila Yami (Comrade Parvati) for this contribution and that in coming days she will continue to progress.

*Prachanda*

(Prachanda)

Chairman

CPN(Maoist)

1<sup>st</sup> February, 2006



## DEDICATED

To those hundreds of women martyrs  
who gave their lives  
for the emancipation  
of humankind;

To those maimed, raped, disappeared  
and incarcerated women  
who are continuing  
to fight in People's War in Nepal;

To those uneducated rural women  
who dare to lead the torch of  
liberation against all oppressions;  
and  
those educated urban women  
who are prepared to work  
as nuts and bolts of Revolution;

To those who are observing  
the great historical process  
and are waiting to join it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Comrade Parvati (Hisila Yami) is the foremost woman revolutionary leader of Nepal. One of the two women leaders to reach the Polit-Bureau of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which has been leading an earth-shaking Maoist People's War (PW) for the last ten years, she has worked in the Women's Department and International Department of the Party.*

*In 1978 she started her revolutionary life as a student activist in India. She was elected General Secretary of All India Nepalese Students Association in 1981-82. Upon her return to Nepal in 1983, she pursued her profession as an architect but continued with her revolutionary activities particularly in the women's movement. She was elected Treasurer of Nepal Engineers' Association in 1985-87. While she worked clandestinely for the Communist Party, she rose to become the President of All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary) in 1995-97.*

*Before she went underground with the initiation of the PW in February 1996, she was in the forefront of the militant mass movements. She has been a fierce critic of beauty contests and had been involved in many protests against beauty pageants. She was jailed for 20 days during the historic people's movement of 1990. She was repeatedly arrested even after the advent of multi-party parliamentary democracy, once in 1990 and twice in 1995, for her political activities.*

*She was chosen 'Woman of the Year' by the magazine Antarrastriya Manch (International Forum) in 1990, and one of the 'Top Ten Women of Nepal' by the Nepali Magazine Bimochan in 2005.*

*Born in a well-known Newar family (her father, Dharma Ratna Yami, was a Deputy Minister of Nepal in 1951) in Kathmandu in 1959, she received most of her education in India. She studied Masters of Architecture from New Castle-Upon-Tyne(UK) in 1993-95. She was a Lecturer at Institute of Engineering, Phulchowk Campus (Lalitpur) from 1984 to 1996.*

*Comrade Parvati is a regular contributor of articles both in Nepali and English in well-known magazines and newspapers. An anthology of articles by Hisila Yami and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai on the women's question is published in Nepali as Marxbad ra Mahila Mukti (Marxism and Women's Emancipation) (Uiprerak Prakashan, 2000).*

## **PREFACE**

No oppression on this planet is as intense, as massive a world phenomenon and out-beating all extra-class oppressions (be it religious, racial, caste, nationality and regional oppressions) as the oppression of women. Of all the extra-class discriminations, perhaps women's discrimination is the most complete one starting from womb to tomb. Moreover, it is one of the oldest oppressions of all forms of oppressions. Hence, it may be called mother of extra-class oppressions. No wonder that all the ruling classes of the society and their allies are busy to interpret this oppression, but not to change it. One can boldly assert that only revolutionary communists, with their scientific historical dialectical materialist outlook and the immense sacrifices they are prepared to give, can dare to change this archaic oppression. Here it is important to make distinction between poor women and rich women. I am not referring to those few super-rich women who by virtue of being wives are wasteful consumers or very few rich capitalist women who compete with other rich capitalist men to exploit working class and who may nevertheless cry fowl of gender-discrimination when their privilege to exploit is taken away. Here I am talking of poor working-women belonging to all oppressed sections of society who are self-exploiting to hilt to keep their hearth burning. To be more specific, this book is about Nepalese poor women, poorest of all poor women in the world, who are struggling against poverty, rugged geography without basic infrastructure, discriminatory Hindu feudal state by participating in People's War [PW] lead by Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (Maoist)] since February 1996.

Nepalese society is undergoing the greatest upheaval in Nepalese history in the form of PW. The most visible face of Nepalese PW is that of women dressed in combat dress with guns slinging on their shoulders. One may ask why women in such a large scale are taking to violence to achieve their liberation. There are objective and subjective reasons. The objective reason is: women have been the main stable and sustaining force in rural Nepal, where able-bodied male members used to mass-migrate to adjoining urban centres of Nepal and India. Before the PW

started, these women could not even own the land and house that they ploughed and inhabited, they were not protected against polygamy while they were the sole sustainers of family. In addition, when they were raped they could not even abort. Their routine life, working as domestic slave in maternal house till marriage and after the marriage another rigorous domestic slave life coupled with early motherhood triggering early setting of old age, is so monotonous that they are dying for any change from this vicious circle of life. The position of women belonging to oppressed nationalities was no better, although they were relatively freer than the Aryan women. In the face of poverty and lack of opportunities, their freedom was manifested in multiple marriages, or being sold in flesh trade in urban centres of India. The position of urban women was no better, as they fell victim to consumerism and sweatshops run by comprador bourgeoisie. It was this fury accumulated through centuries of feudal oppression that was waiting to burst out and it found an expression in class war in the form of protracted PW. The subjective reason behind their mass participation in PW is the scientific outlook of the CPN (Maoist) on the question of Women's Liberation. The Party is able to give correct fusion of gender oppression with class oppression pertaining to poor women belonging to all oppressed caste, nationalities and regions. By doing so, it is able to unleash the fury of women against the feudal state that is perpetuating women's oppression ideologically, politically, militarily, economically, socially and culturally. Secondly, it treats oppressed women as strategic partner in not only completing revolution, but also in preventing counter-revolution. Thirdly, it considers women's force as the most reliable force that will push for continuous revolution until communist stateless system is achieved when complete Women's Liberation can be achieved. Lastly, it has justified women's violence as counter-violence against both state and domestic violence. Their multi-faceted participation in PW has greatly helped in sustaining, expanding and consolidating PW. Their level of sacrifice, dedication and commitment despite being tortured, maimed, raped and killed has greatly impressed the Party and the society. Their role in mass mobilisation by establishing a close relation as that of nail and flesh has been well acknowledged. However, their political maturity still has a long way to go.

As for myself, I had been a liberal feminist before I became a communist. And after joining this great historic PW, I hope I am able to fuse gender issues with class issues, something I have had strong desire to do from the time I became a communist feminist. In ten years of PW,

I hope I could manage to have some deeper understanding of the problems and challenges Nepalese women used to face within this movement and to throw some light into the multi-faceted role women have been playing in PW in Nepal. Most of my collected articles are from various issues of *The Worker* – the organ of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Some are updated translation of articles written in Nepalese language in various magazines and weekly newspapers and some English articles had appeared in some international periodicals. In this collections, I have also added few articles related to other aspects of People's War to give more holistic outlook of People's War in Nepal.

My sincere thanks goes to Comrade Prachanda, the Chairman of CPN (Maoist) who had kindly spared time to go through the contents of my book and write foreword for it. I would also like to thank Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, a senior leader of CPN (Maoist) for his valuable comments on this book. My thanks also goes to A.K. Sengupta who had been encouraging me to get my collected articles in a book form. At this point, I must acknowledge the role played by Li Onesto, the US based progressive journalist, who has contributed historically in internationalising the Nepalese women's role in PW.

15 April, 2006

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hisila Yami', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hisila Yami

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**LOOK UP TO THE HIMALAYAS -  
A NEW WORLD'S TAKING BIRTH!**



Martyrs irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality  
have become the most socially prestigious in today's Nepal after the People's War.



A Martyr's family-members



Women cadres in a jail

**91 Kilometre Long Shaheed Marg (Martyrs' Road) Construction,  
Where the Feeling of Internationalism also has cemented.**



The construction of *Shaheed Marg* is going on with the people's and PLA's support



A mass meeting before the beginning of the construction-work of a segment of *Shaheed Marg*

**Medical Facility is a Major Concern  
for the PLA and the People's Government**



**Amid all types of odds,  
PLA is continuing to perform different successful medical operations**



**A treated woman PLA-cadre**



## In A New World!



A blow to the base of disinformation  
A Maoist FM-Radio station is broadcasting the news and other programmes.



Caste and nationality barrier  
has now become an obscure and obnoxious thing of the past. Old expensive marriage-ceremonies  
have also become a matter to be ridiculed.  
Women, including widows, are now conducting the marriages. Two cadres of PLA from different castes and nationalities  
are getting married.  
Both of these Comrades became martyrs in later period

**Now Not only Fighters,  
Women Commanders  
and Political Commissars in PLA  
Became Common.**



**PLA is participating in production**



**A Woman Commander of PLA.**

**Cultural Expressions Got A New Meaning.  
Now Old Cultural Forms are Serving  
the New Content for the People.**



**Sword Dance performing by PLA-cadres**



**Performance by a People's Cultural Organisation**



CPN (M) is of the Opinion to Fuse Military-Struggles with Mass-Struggles. So, Time-to-Time Massive Mass-Struggles are Rocking Nepal. One is the Latest Mass Movement For the Establishment of Republic.



A Woman leader is addressing a mass meeting



During the recent mass movement for the establishment of Republic

# **Ten Years Of People's War And The Question Of Women's Liberation**

Today the world is getting swiped with imperialist, religious, ethnic and regional strife. From this fact, it can easily be said that rebellion is here to stay. This is because when and wherever inequality, exploitation and disparity increase, the world gets more divided between the haves and have-nots. However, in most of the places this rebellion is not acquiring scientific outlet. In some places it is being manifested in the form of religious or ethnic strife, while in other places, in the form of regional outburst. This has reached such a state that in imperialist generated wars, the rebellious forces, in absence of the correct political, ideological orientation, are forced to wage wars along religious line against the imperialist forces. In all these wars, women are the worst sufferers because these sectarian movements push women into medieval condition in the name of safeguarding their honour. However, Nepal is one of the few countries where class war is being waged at national scale. It is said that the proletarian force is the only force which has nothing to loose but its chains, hence they have no religion, nationality, geography or gender. However, in today's class divided world, are there not divisions based on religion, race, caste, nationality and gender? In fact, these divisions are on the increase. These divisions can be truly and completely removed only when these movements are integrated into the class movement. It is only in this movement that women can freely aspire for true liberation without worrying about safeguarding their honour for the sake of keeping religious, nationality and regional identities of the community they belong to. Today, this is exactly what is happening in Nepal.

The specificity of People's War [PW] in Nepal is that today it is able to integrate all the sectarian movements within the proletarian movement. In short, it is able to integrate non-class based movements with class-based movement. The existence of a new state based on regional and nationality autonomy in 80% of Nepal on the strength of class war is the proof of this. It is important to note that in these autonomous states women and dalits enjoy special rights. Because of this, feudal

cultural habits that have been affecting for centuries have now been transformed into progressive culture. The reality is that women's liberation is deeply related with class, dalit, nationality and regional liberation questions. It is related with the withering away of class and state, hence it is a strategic question for the proletariat movement. May be that is why Lenin often mentioned that how far any country, society or community has advanced can be judged by the state of women in that country, society or community. From that point of view, the achievements acquired by ten years of PW can be judged by what achievements women have acquired within the last ten years of PW, particularly in the Party, the People's Liberation Army [PLA] and the new state.

## THE PARTY

It is important to note that the participation of women in the Party before the PW started was very nominal. If women did happen to be Party workers, their visibility was very low. In many cases, those women who became active Party members fell into oblivion after marriage. In short, in due course of time women leaders would get demoted to cadre level, cadre to sympathiser level and sympathisers to mass level. The general graph would be if husbands were full time Party workers then most of the wives would be either Party sympathisers or part time workers in women's mass front. In fact ideal woman was considered to be the one who created conducive atmosphere so that husband could work unhindered in the Party, thus such was done by mother for father, by wife for her husband, by sister for her brother etc. This situation has been transformed with the waging of PW. Now the Party considers ideal woman as one who is able to rebel against domestic slavery and serve the PW. Also, the waging of PW has brought about the polarisation of class outlook even inside the family, with those who are for revolution on one side and those against it on the other side. PW has created conducive environment for recruiting those who are on the side of revolution as full time professional workers irrespective of their gender. This has facilitated those part-time women workers to become full time professional workers. Amongst the masses too, women could now turn into full time Party workers from their position as full time house workers.

It is important to note that many of the qualities that communists should acquire are already present in working women class in the form of raw material. The kind of discipline, secrecy, alertness, tolerance, sacrifice, social instinct, labourious, commitment, simplicity, tenancy,

responsibility and genuineness that are required in Party cadres are already present amongst poor labouring women who acquire these qualities while working under harsh conditions within the house and outside it. That is why despite bearing torture, rape, disappearances, incarceration and death, they are continuing to fight in PW. It is also important to note that in a family if a woman becomes a Party cadre then there is greater chance that the whole family will be politicised. Hence, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (Maoist)] has given great emphasis to draw women to Party work. It is important to note that women's mass front has been campaigning 'one ward one organisation, one house one member' to increase base for the Party membership. However, the Party is also aware of their lack of theoretical knowledge, hence efforts have been made to fill this gap by giving due importance to their participation in all fields of PW and educating them.

The specificity of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachanda Path is that it has accepted women as that strategic force which not only prevents counter-revolution but also carries on continuous revolution. This is because women being the first to be subjugated in history of humankind will be the last to be liberated, hence they are for ever pushing revolution to higher form from New Democratic revolution to socialism and to communism where their complete liberation will be guaranteed. Hence, CPN (Maoist) has not only sought their increased participation but has also sought their leadership in all the three instruments of revolution. It is therefore important to transform those women who have joined PW to Party members so that they can be the iron pillars for the revolution. It is also important to make women aware about how strategic the position of the Party is amongst the three instruments of revolution because it is the instrument of ideology, the guiding instrument for the whole movement. Earlier, before PW started, women preferred to work in woman mass front than in the Party. Today, it is more important to be in Party because counter-revolution starts from Party machinery before spreading to other fields. Within the last ten years of PW, women have occupied posts ranging from cell to Polit-bureau members. There are also many women occupying district, area secretary posts and holding important posts in various departments within the Party. In people's army they occupy the position of political commissar right from section to platoon to company to battalion to brigade level, thus giving the army political education. It is important to observe that by virtue of their double oppression they will have higher proletarian spirit than men of the same class, hence this potentiality should be tapped by the Party

intime.

The Party has still a lot to do to develop women's political and ideological level. It is interesting to note that Women's Department had surveyed the position of women in the Party in the year 2003; it was found that 64.11% mentioned the importance of increasing ideological level when asked what problem they faced in the Party. It is generally found that when it comes to two-line struggle women become defensive, while in battlefield they are offensive. This is the result of their lack of ideological and theoretical knowledge. In regular rectification campaigns carried out within the movement women can play a very significant role in cleansing the Party because of their greater commitment to the movement. However, when they lack ideological knowledge they fall into the trap of cleansing only technical aspects without seeking ideological rectification which is the principal aspect.

### **THE PEOPLE'S ARMY**

The PLA is a means to transform political and ideological force into physical force. Thus, it also gives teeth to women's liberation by making it a fighting force. The specificity of PW in Nepal is that it took the policy of integrating women in PLA right from its initiation. Unlike in most other movements, women were not drawn into the armed force as part of the last resort, or as a tactical move but as part of a strategy to unleash their fury. In fact, People's Army has become such a powerful tool to transform women within short period that the ruling class is alarmed by this particular transformation which has not only challenged the traditional image of women but has also made them jittery about its effect in traditional family structure. PLA has unleashed the medieval oppression that women have been carrying ideologically, physically, psychologically, sociologically and economically in various forms. First of all, it has removed the fear psychology and feeling of insecurity amongst women, preparing strong base for eroding religious and superstitious beliefs within the family. Secondly, it has destroyed the feudal base that look upon women as impure, diseased and helpless souls. With the empowerment of women, both ideologically and physically, they have not only become proud of their body, but have started taking responsibility for its upkeep. Thirdly, it has been able to quench the thirst for knowledge amongst the women who are often illiterate or semi-literate. It is important to note that amongst all women, those joining PLA belong to poorer class and oppressed community than those in other organisations within the Party. So many of them

could not even recognise alphabets before joining the army. Today they are able to read and take down notes of technical military teachings. Fourthly, it is able to teach women gender and class character of the ruling class through practice. They are able to fuse theoretical teaching with practical experiences such as 'power flows through the barrel of gun', 'without army people have nothing', 'state capture is the principal goal', etc. Sixthly, today women are able to compete with men in equal footing in war fronts. In fact, women combatants often fight to be included in assault group. So many of them are leading military strikes, being martyred, maimed, tortured, raped and incarcerated. Lastly, it has removed feudal relations between men and women and has replaced it with scientific healthy relationship between them. As a result, love marriage based on ideological commitment and feelings have been made possible, breaking all religious, nationality, geographical and regional barriers. This is also changing the traditional division of labour. There are cases where wives will be found in battlefield while husbands will be found in non-combatant field. Similarly sometimes wives will be leading husbands as leaders in war-field.

Today women constitute about 30-50% of the force in PLA. There are even more women in militia. In fact, to increase their confidence and to develop women's leadership in PLA, separate women specific section, platoon sometimes even company has been made. Women have been heading PLA as commanders and vice-commanders in section, platoon, company, battalion and brigade. The policy of militarizing the whole Party structure and the masses has helped in militarising women, thus helping to remove age-old discrimination. In fact this militarisation has forced the old state's army Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) to recruit women in their army much against their ideology to face Maoist women. The expanding military structure has enabled women to expand their skills in various fields, it has also enabled women combatants to return to military structure after giving birth. It is important to note that the women's mass front has time and again launched campaigns under the banner 'campaign from house to war-front' to increase base for recruiting women in militia and PLA.

It should be noted that in PLA, women are found to have more tenacity, are able to keep greater secrecy and are less likely to flee from battlefield than men. Similarly, successes do not easily go over their heads nor do defeats doom them easily. Their social skills and their hardworking nature help PLA to do organisational and production works efficiently. However, there is still problem in accepting women leadership in PLA.

In the survey conducted by Women's Department it was found that maximum number of women (25.75%) replied 'tendency to see women as inferior' in a question asked about the main problem women faced in military force. Similarly, women in general, particularly women in leadership position in PLA, have problem of continuity. Marriage, especially after they become mothers, disrupts their continuity. Also, their health deteriorates faster than men limiting their span in combatant work. Often it is found that while injured men come back to their original post, the same is not seen when women bear children. Hence, adequate health care together with availability of family planning measures for both men and women should be provided. Similarly, the Party should remove hurdles faced in establishing women's leadership within PLA.

## THE STATE

The specificity of women's participation in the new state is that CPN (Maoist) has given special right of representation in the new state; the ratio to be achieved is 50%. However, there is still dearth of their participation in that ratio, but the trend is on increase. Since people's power is both an instrument of transformation for new values and a mass-based structure, it needs the input of women all the more, especially in the context of Nepal where in rural areas they are the stable sustainers of life, considering that men go for temporary migration to urban areas of Nepal and India for earning hard cash.

Since central state is yet to be captured, the function of people's state is principally to destroy old state machinery. However, with 80% of areas under CPN (Maoist) control, people's state needs to take the question of construction very seriously. Regarding providing security to new state, militia has been mobilised at the local level. They also work as auxiliary force for the main force PLA. They are involved in militarizing the masses and recruiting masses for PLA directly or through militia and they are also involved in the production and organisational work at local level. Hence, they have important role in linking the mass with people's state. Women in great proportion are involved in militia work.

In economic activities, women have been providing constant source of levy through money or kind. Although individually women may appear poorer but organisationally, they are richer than most of other mass organisations. They are already investing their share in running restaurant, shops and small-scale industries run by the new state. There have also been cases where women have contributed their personal

jewelries in order to support new state economically. They are also involved in cottage industries such as in producing socks, gloves, cloths, bags etc. It is important to note the campaigns done by women's mass front with slogans such as 'where there is contact there is organisation, where there is organisation there is production' and 'Exchange of skill campaign'. These campaigns have been most intensively carried out in base areas.

In the field of education, before the central Education Department was constituted, women's mass front at local level was already giving literacy classes. Today they are involved in running model schools, crèches and hostels for children.

In legal front, many women are taking basic legal training courses to work as bare footed lawyers in people's court. This has made legal work local based, less time consuming, less costly, thus making it popular amongst the masses. In base areas, particularly in 'women exploitation-free model villages', women are getting equal share of parental property and domestic violence has considerably reduced. Similarly, child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy have been reduced. In fact in the new legal system separate law regarding women and family has been formulated.

In construction field, they are involved in making local pedestrian and horse tracks, building rest houses, bridges and martyr gates. In any large-scale construction, their inputs are sought.

In cultural field, introducing new scientific culture has made great leaps. Through various campaigns such as 'women transformation campaign', 'consciousness raising campaign', 'cleanliness raising campaign' higher culture, clean and anti-liquor environment has been gradually replacing old backward culture. The local republic FM radio periodically gives advertisement to wear simple dresses, to buy locally made products etc. Many traditional celebrations such as expensive marriages, long mourning period, torturous widowhood period, first menstruation period etc. have been simplified or banned totally. They have defied traditional ban against ploughing, roofing houses. New celebrations like 8<sup>th</sup> March International Women's Day, May Day, PW Initiation Day, Martyr Week etc. are being celebrated at local level. It is important to note that progressive local culture has been retained and modified while unscientific backward culture has been slowly replaced by new culture.

The overall position of women in people's state is their low participation. This is reflected in the reply women have given in the survey where maximum number of women (46.69%) mentioned 'low



women' when asked the main problem women faced in people's state. The Party should take note that it is not enough to give them special rights. An environment should be created simultaneously to make them both red and expert so that women are accepted as leaders by the masses.

## **PPOBLEMS AND CHALLENGES**

While revolution solves old contradictions, it creates new contradictions. In fact, one progresses ahead by solving new contradictions. In this regard, PW has been to much extent successful in destroying old feudal oppression. However, replacing it with new progressive one and then safeguarding what has been achieved in war situation is still more challenging. Generally it has been found that women have joined PW in great numbers and have sacrificed a lot but they are yet to be well equipped with organisational, ideological and military skills. Where they have shown these qualities, they are yet to be accepted and established as leaders within various organisations of the Party. To assert women's leadership, forces of habit and attitude still have to be fought against at all levels.

Regarding their position in Party, women exhibit plenty of proletarian spirit and sacrifice but their ideological acumen has yet to mature. They still tend to see things in individuality, in parts, in intentions rather than in trend, pattern, and totality and in end result. Conscious effort by women themselves and the Party has to be made to bridge this gap.

Regarding their position in the PLA, women have no doubt shown how offensive they can be in the war front, but in ideological field they are often defensive. They need to be taught that giving life for the movement is not the only form of sacrifice; living honourably, sacrificing motherhood or delaying it so as to concentrate in overall fight is also another form of sacrifice. In short, they should be taught that correct ideological outlook is as much important as the technical fight in the war front.

Regarding their position in people's state, women still need to work hard to exercise their authority so that masses accept them as leaders. They need to know that merely working hard, being simple and practical is not enough; they need to win minds of masses for which ideological and political acumen is necessary. In absence of this, they may unknowingly fall into trap of bureaucratic method of handling contradictions.

In totality, problem of women in PW is the problem of backwardness

of their theoretical and ideological knowledge for which they have to fight against themselves at one end, and at the other end the Party has to provide conducive environment so that they have access to theoretical and ideological development.

## CONCLUSION

Lenin has correctly pointed that those transformations that would have taken ten years before the revolution, take ten days after the revolution. In Nepal's case, it would not be an exaggeration if one claimed that transformations which would have taken centuries before the revolution have taken ten years even while the revolution is going on. Today, the image of tired, malnourished women carrying children at one end and rearing cattle at the other end has been transformed into image of dignified fighting women with guns.

In reality, the vehicle of transformation of the society lies with women. Hence, the status-quoists will always try to jam this vehicle with religious rust. From this point of view, lot of positive achievements have been made in the last ten years of PW. Firstly, PW has directed state and domestic violence into class war. It has been successful in unleashing the fury of women (so far submerged under feudal oppression) against the feudal state. Secondly, it has created basic infrastructure (although in limited number) such as crèche centres, hostels for children and communes in base areas, which has partially removed the burden of domestic drudgery on women by making them more socially productive and freer to be more goal-oriented. Thirdly, it is able to consolidate the gains it has achieved in due course of class war by making 'women exploitation-free model village' centres for practicing what they have preached. Fourthly, it has been able to transform individual sacrifice made by women in the name of protecting private property into social sacrifice for social cause. In short, it has been able to tap social, community and cooperative nature that women have acquired from being reproductive besides being productive force, for the social benefit of the new people's state, paving way for communism. Fifthly, it has been able to politicise all sections of society, especially the oppressed communities. It has been able to remove feudal hurdles amongst Aryan women, especially the Madhesi women in Terai region. It has been able to consolidate, develop and make goal-oriented, the relative freedom that Mongolian women have been traditionally enjoying. It has specially been successful in mobilising socially depressed community, the Dalitwomen, against their sub-human state, and to help them lead

dignified life. Sixthly, it has been able to direct its attack at the feudal state as the main instrument of women's oppression, thus making them aware of the importance of having one's own army to fight against the old state's army. Lastly, it has been able to fuse gender issues with class issues linking it with the process of development of ideology

In the end, the challenge of all the revolutions is not only to consolidate the gains made by the revolution but also to develop them further. This applies for gains made by women too because it has been found that women are the first casualty of counter-revolutions in history. This becomes a matter of greater concern for Nepalese women, where the central state has yet to be captured. Hence, the gains so far made have to be not only protected and consolidated, but also developed. It can be achieved only on the strength of proletarian military force based on the protection, practice and development of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. This has been succinctly pointed by Chairman Prachanda: *"It is the protection, practice and development of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology behind which the great transformation process of Nepalese society is taking place in course of People's War. The unprecedented participation of oppressed women in the war front defying death in reality expresses new ideology and higher stage of women's liberation movement. New powerful ideology based on protection, practice and development of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology is also developed on the strength of People's War. From the experience of history including the life experience of Nepalese revolution it becomes clear that the real liberation of oppressed class cannot be achieved by shunning the process of protection, practice and development of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. The condition for women's liberation is also intensively related with this ideology, hence revolutionary women need to concentrate on this."* [Comrade Prachanda, in *Mahila Dhawani* (The Voice of Women); year 25; no.- 16; February, 2005, Pp. - 5.]

20 February 2006

# **Women's Participation In People's War In Nepal**

*"Anybody who knows anything of history  
knows that great social changes are impossible  
without the feminine ferment."*

*– Marx*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ever since an armed People's War was initiated in Nepal from February 13, 1996 under the leadership of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) about 800 people have been martyred amongst whom nearly 100 are women. Along with hundreds of men, women are also undergoing rigorous imprisonment terms, many have gone missing, and many have been raped and tortured. The spark of fire that started from Rukum, Rolpa districts in Western Nepal has now spread to all parts of Nepal. Today even the government and foreign medias are forced to acknowledge this. But what has baffled them is the degree of participation of women in People's War in Nepal. This should be understood under the background that Nepal, although a semi-feudal and semi-colonial country is predominantly a feudal economy with 88% of the total population living in rural areas and 81% of the population engaged in agriculture sector, with agriculture holding 42% of the total GNP of the country. The feudal land relation can be judged by the fact that 65% of poor peasants own only 10% of land while 10% of rich peasants and landlords own 65% of land. This is reinforced with gender-biasness in the production relations between men and women as women are barred from inheriting their parental property.

## **SOURCES OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION**

### **Women's Economic Oppression**

Women's economic oppression is firmly rooted in the present feudal and semi-feudal mode of production, which is dominated by petty-peasant production. Land being the chief means of production, women's economic oppression is firmly rooted in the present land-ownership

relation, which is patrilinear and patrifocal in nature. Women's chief sources of contradiction, hence alienation within the present production relation, lies in the fact that despite bearing double workloads at household level and farm level they cannot legally own them in equal terms with their male counterparts. Also, they cannot inherit tenancy right on land on equal par with men. As a result, they have no access to banking transactions, thus further limiting their scope for economic upliftment. This puts them strategically at a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis the men. On top of this the remnant of medieval relations such as serfdom in Terai region, debt slavery in Terai and hill region makes women's position most vulnerable as they have to often provide 'voluntary' sex and labor services to landlord's households in addition to labor in their farmland. The low level of productive forces in Nepalese agriculture further reinforces women's economic oppression, which is extremely backward with hardly any modern inputs. Labour in agriculture is thus predominantly dominated by human labor supplemented by animal labor with the help of most primitive equipment like sickle, hoe, shovel etc. On top of this, absence of basic infrastructure within the household (such as absence of fuel, water sources and dependence on manual processing of agricultural products) makes household work tire-some and time-consuming. It is a well-known fact that in unequal society, the more labour intensive the work is the more the work burden falls upon women. On top of this due to subsistence nature of agriculture and the semi-unemployment state generated by the rain-fed cultivation, there is mass-migration of able male members to urban areas of Nepal and India, thus leaving women and children to toil in both land and the household. One can easily infer from this that women are the backbone of subsistence rural agriculture economy. Because women are marginalised at household level, they are paid less; sometimes it is as low as half the amount paid to men for the same job and same amount of farm-work.

Position of women in urban areas is no better. If women in rural areas are suffering because of backward medieval feudal oppression then women in urban areas are suffering under modern imperialist oppression. They are underpaid and are often sexually exploited in sweatshops run by bureaucratic capitalists backed by imperialist and expansionist forces such as in garment and carpet factories etc.

## **Women's Social Oppression**

Roots of women's oppression must not only be sought in economic

structure but also in social, cultural structure. Similarly, source of women's exploitation must not only be sought in her productive life but also in her reproductive life. Women's social oppression is firmly rooted in state sponsored Hindu religion which upholds feudal Brahminical rule based on caste system, which disparages women in relation to men. Thus, women are looked upon as mere 'daughters' before they become 'wives' until they die as 'mothers' of children (particularly sons). Because of patrilinear inheritance law, Nepal has one of the highest indices of son preferences in the world. This makes women face discrimination from womb to tomb. This can be seen manifested in their high mortality rate. They die younger than men (52 years for women and 55 years for men). Also, Nepal has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (875 per 100,000). It has also one of the highest child mortality rates, nearly one child in every 10 die before reaching the age of one. All this is accompanied with early marriage, early pregnancy, and multiple pregnancies making much demand on mental and physical health of women. Because women are seen as a means to beget son/sons to inherit the private property, hence women are forced to go to any extent for begetting sons even at the cost of their own health, in order to secure their marital life and to ensure their share of land via their sons. Thus, women without their sons are mostly abandoned or socially ostracised or co-wived.

The caste system makes women belonging to the scheduled (or untouchable) caste even more vulnerable economically, socially and sexually. In fact, the imposition of Hindu culture on the society is so strong that it has even affected the women who belong to less feudalism non-Hindu groups.

## **Women's Political Oppression**

Women's political oppression is rooted in patriarchal economic and social relations that are upheld by the present monarchical parliamentary system. The hire to the royal throne through male lineage, together with personification of king as a living god makes male members politically more powerful than female members in society. Thus, men are the rulers, and women the ruled even within the household. The king thus represents a patriarch in body and spirit. Hence, unlike in other bourgeois republican countries where women have at least legal access to parental property, women in Nepal do not even have this legal provision, putting them strategically at a disadvantage position in entering the political life within the present political system. Thus in parliamentary politics women are

eventually used as ready made source of vote bank through their male linkages. The present parliamentary system, which requires money and capital to win in the election, becomes a big hindrance to women. Those limited women who have managed to enter into politics are widows, wives or daughters of the already known politicians.

## **WOMEN AND NEW DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION**

*"Without revolutionary ideology  
there cannot be revolutionary movement."*

*— Lenin*

Women in Nepal have reasons to fight for New Democratic revolution as it addresses their economic, social and political oppression in totality. As mentioned earlier the source of women's economic oppression is primarily their access to land-ownership in equal par with men. This is directly addressed in New Democratic revolution where the central economic feature is the agrarian revolution. Under this system, a revolutionary land reform is carried out under the slogan of 'Land to the tillers'. Along with this, revolutionary land relationship between men and women are carried out under the slogan of 'Women's equal right to property'. Thus in rural areas women's access to land property will be able to make them important part of rural agriculture economy. In urban areas this right will allow them to inherit urban land, other means of production such as industry, business enterprises etc., thus making them part of urban economic system. This prepares the first foundation for her economic emancipation, which will have important bearing on other socio-political arenas.

Since New Democratic system is anti-feudal, it will at once remove any religious tint given to the state thus making it a secular state. With the end of feudal Brahminical Hindu rule, women become culturally independent from men. This will gradually remove biasness against daughters making them as important as sons within the household.

Under the New Democratic system, there is no question of accommodating feudal monarchy, which is the symbol of patriarchal rule over women. Hence politically New Democratic system prepares ground for removing patriarchal rule and in its place women will constitute as one of the important groups along with other oppressed groups in the anti-feudal and anti-colonial united front government. Hence, women in Nepal have reasons for fighting tooth and nail for establishing the New Democratic system.

The anti-imperialist nature of New Democratic revolution will abolish unequal relations with imperialist, expansionist countries thus saving women from sweatshops where they are exploited sexually and economically. This prepares ground for removing prostitution, consumerisation and commoditisation of women in Nepal.

## **REVOLUTIONARY TREND IN WOMEN'S MASS ORGANISATION**

Having grasped the essence of New Democratic Revolution and its relevance to women's emancipation, women's organisations, particularly *All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) [ANWA (Revolutionary)]* has set a revolutionary trend in women's movement in Nepal. This should be understood under the background that women's movement in Nepal could be broadly categorised into three distinct trends. The rightist and reactionary trend openly serves the interest of feudalist and bureaucratic capitalist forces. They talk of women's emancipation but support constitutional monarchy system, uphold state sponsored Hindu religion and are openly engaged in imperialist sponsored NGO/INGO activities. They grumble against commoditisation of women but dare not protest against beauty pageants etc. They condemn revolutionary violence but condone state violence. They are closer to ruling parties such as Nepali Congress, 'United Marxist-Leninist' [UML] and 'Marxist-Leninist' Parties. The second is the revisionist trend. In words, they sound revolutionary, but in action, they practice reformism. They say they are republican but are engaged in monarchical parliamentary system. They condemn the activities of NGOs and INGOs theoretically but in practice, many of them are engaged in such activities. They are closer to groups like 'Masal', 'Unity Centre' etc. The third category belongs to the revolutionary trend. This is represented by *ANWA(R)*. It is closer to CPN (Maoist). It has taken a clear stand regarding male supremacy as the product of private property. Hence, it is very clear about the class nature of the present state, which is maintaining class oppression and gender oppression. Similarly it has taken a clear stand against NGO/INGO activities in both words and in deeds as they consider these organisations as extensions of imperialist and expansionist forces whose ultimate aim is to prepare ground for expanding their market, while at the same time checking the growth of genuine revolutionary movement of the people. Pursuing the policy of unity and struggle, it has been forging broad alliances with other forces, particularly with anti-feudal and anti-colonial forces to protest against



beauty contests, pornographic literature, sale of liquor etc. They have formed broad alliance to protest against state repression on women, particularly rape and torture perpetuated on sympathisers of People's War. While other organisations condemn revolutionary violence, this organisation considers it as a legitimate defensive measure of the masses against the present state, based on armed might.

## **WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEOPLE'S WAR IN NEPAL**

*"Women hold half the sky."  
— Mao Tse-tung*

In Nepal, women's active participation in war can be traced to the days of centralised feudal state expansion campaign in the end-eighteenth and beginning-nineteenth century, particularly to 1815 in the battle of Nalapani in Deharadoon (at present in Northern India) where Nepalese women and children together with their men folk offered a heroic resistance against the British army who not only outnumbered them but also had better equipment and despite all these they (the British) could not seize on Kalanga fort only on their third attempt after incurring heavy losses on the British side.

Similarly, women were mobilised during anti-Rana movement by various anti-Rana political parties during 1947-50, culminating in the overthrow of the Rana regime in the year 1950. Similarly, women took active participation in the democracy movement of 1990 which ended 30 years of one-party rule of the autocratic monarchy, 'Panchayat', replacing it with monarchical parliamentary system. However, in all such movements, women were mainly drawn from the known political families or from urban educated women and were mainly based in urban areas.

It was only after CPN (Maoist) started the People's War that women from grassroots, mainly rural women, started getting mobilised. Today they are professional fighters in guerrilla war. The traditional weapons such as stones, sickles and sticks which women hurled on enemies on earlier movements have now been upgraded to holding guns, rifles and gun powder. Earlier they were looked upon as mere helpers or as reserve force for political movements, but today they are leaders, commanders of guerrilla squads constituting of men and women. This development should be understood under the background that the Section 10 of Army Act 1960 of the Nepalese Government bans the recruitment of women

into the Royal Nepal Army. Realising the double exploitative state of women, CPN (Maoist) has rightly targeted them for unleashing their doubly repressed energy to attack the system which has been responsible for their present pathetic state. In each guerrilla squad, it has made the policy of recruiting at least two women guerrillas (in each guerrilla squad there are about 9-11 members). Women guerrillas work as combatants at night and do propaganda and production work during daytime. Where circumstances demand, exclusive women's guerrilla squads have been constituted, but this is more of an exception than the rule. One incident in Rolpa is worth mentioning where an exclusive women's guerrilla squad was responsible in annihilating a feudal tyrant who was also known to exploit women sexually. At every village, area and district level women have been mobilised under women's mass organisation. In revolutionary stronghold areas people's court have been established where along with other cases, cases against women's exploitation have been brought to book with the combined effect of Village Defense Committee, women's mass organisation and the people. Many cases of land usurpation of widows or single women have been restored to them through such courts. Many defaulting husbands who have taken to drinking and beating of their wives or practicing polygamy, sexually exploiting women have been disciplined through such courts. One such interesting case in Parvat district is worth mentioning. A schoolteacher was known to exploit women sexually while promising them to help find matches for their marriages. He was brought to people's court and was made to stand up and down, holding his ears for several minutes and was made to apologise for his crime and was let off after warning him of greater consequences, should he continue with his crime.

Where women are not directly involved in fighting guerrilla warfare they are working as support force for the People's War. They function as organisers, as propagandists, as cultural activists, as logistics suppliers, as nurses for the wounded fighters and cadres, as espionage workers, as cover for the party cadres or combatants, as visitors and source of inspirations in jails and in martyr's family households. They are also trained to prepare locally made gunpowder.

Because culturally women have been associated with household work, women activists have been most effective in mobilising masses in new areas as they are easily accepted at household level. This has facilitated male cadres to gain access to households in new areas. It has been generally observed that in places where local women were mobilised, such places eventually became stable bases for sustaining the movement.

Also, because of women's multiple role inside and outside the house, she provides a good cover for many logistic and espionage works for party cadres or guerrillas.

In regards to women's firm commitment to People's War it has been generally found that they often take time to decide to join the movement, but once they are into it they stick to it much firmer than the male cadres. There have been fewer cases of surrender or running away from war fields. They are also found least liable to disclose party related secrets. They are thus found to have greater perseverance and patience than men (although they lag behind men in their theoretical knowledge). This may be due to the fact that women have more to gain from this movement than men, i.e. for them it is not only the question of escaping away from class oppression but also gender oppression. After all, breaking off double chains requires greater strength and strong will power!

Following heroic instances of women exemplify the different roles women have been playing in People's War in Nepal:

**Dilmaya Yonjan:** She was the first woman combatant who heroically gave her life in the successful Bethan armed raid. She was killed while she was igniting a bomb. What makes her martyrdom even more meaningful is that she belongs to an oppressed nationality of the Tamangs.

**Lali Rokka:** She was a social activist and health assistant in a remote Rolpa district. She was picked up from the health post and shot dead. Her 'fault' was that she actively exposed the reactionary role of a local NGO in her area.

**Bindia Chaulagai:** A young woman in advanced stage of pregnancy was tortured in police custody for providing food for guerrillas in the jungles. The torture resulted in pre-mature delivery of the baby, which ultimately led to its death, followed by her own death few days later.

**Sunsara Budha:** Wife of a Party activist was tortured before her 2 years old child, when she did not reveal whereabouts of her husband, her child was tortured but she still did not buckle. The police then brutally killed her, leaving behind the injured child.

**Kamala Bhatta:** A teacher and President of ANWA(R) Gorkha district was raped and killed by the special commando force of the armed police while she was returning from mass work amongst women in the village.

**Devi Khadka:** She represents a living symbol of barbaric state repression. She was repeatedly raped in police custody leading to laceration of her womb. She was raped because she did not yield to police pressure in signing death certificate of her brother who was

languishing in jail. Today she is alive and actively engaged in the People's War.

***Chiniya Lama, Nirmala Deykota, Manju Kuwar and Suvadra Sapkota:*** police under the direct instigation of the reactionary revisionist UML local leaders killed them along with three other male cultural activists. Their "fault" was that they had been mobilising and organising villagers with progressive culture.

Apart from the above instances, mass rape of women and incidents of airlifting women in helicopters to be raped elsewhere and killed have been reported in the revolutionary stronghold areas. In the initial stages, women were tortured and raped, but now the recent trend is to kill them as well. This signifies that even the reactionary armed forces have now acknowledged women as invincible fighting force. The mass scale of state repression on women also acknowledges participation of women in various capacities in the People's War.

## **ROLE OF PEOPLE'S WAR IN WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATION**

*"People's War is a total war."  
— Mao Tse-tung*

People's War has affected women in different ways. First of all, PW has brought fundamental changes in the Party activist's family life. Earlier before the party launched the PW, there were many contradictions in theory and practice in relating to gender issues within the household and the outer social life. For example, the strong preference for sons, early arranged marriages for daughters, practicing polygamy while advocating strict monogamy to women, practicing feudal cultural customs such as fasting on auspicious dates, practicing untouchability to menstruating women and lower caste people, strong attachments to private property, relegating women to household activities while men engaging in active politics, etc. prevailed. But today with the launching of PW many wives have left home with their husbands to join the movement leaving children to alternative support system. Those wives who have decided to stay back at home have become more economically independent and are more politicalised because of the compulsions of circumstances, the subjective efforts of the Party to politicise them and the overall political atmosphere created by PW. Repeated search operations, warrants, warning and torture, sometimes even rape, have made them even more defiant and aggressive against the state machinery.

Even children have not been spared from such attacks, thus politicising them at an earlier age. They are found actively assisting village defense committees, taking part in cultural activities, helping in propaganda works, espionage works, etc.

Since most of the able-bodied males are forced to go underground in the revolutionary stronghold areas, women and children are left to fend their property and to face police force. Absence of men in household has reversed earlier gender roles. For example, today women are found to ploughing agricultural fields, which are not religiously permitted. They are found roofing their houses, something that is not culturally accepted. Today women in revolutionary areas are defying widowhood ceremony when their husbands are killed by police force. On the other hand, the Party is consciously trying to transform their bereavement into a source of strength, to avenge the killers. These days, newspapers carry such resolutions from these women.

Take the case of Sangeeta Budha, a resident of Rolpa. Her husband was killed by police force in the year 1997. According to her, it was she who worked in her father's house when her father was arrested. Today after the killing of her husband she has taken to jungle to join guerrilla warfare to avenge her husband's killers. Also, PW has effectively transformed otherwise a reactionary Hindu celebration *Teej*<sup>1</sup> into a revolutionary platform for propagating in support of PW and exposing state repression in Nepal.

Absences of men, together with police atrocities, have made women more co-operative amongst each other. On top of this, the Party has launched campaigns for community-based market system, co-operative labour such as *parma* system (a traditional labor-exchange practiced within few farm households) at larger scale, building new and maintaining old roads, installing community water sources, community based fodder or fuel collection, installing new *Chautara* (public rest places) etc. Take the instance of one such *Chautara* constructed at the border of Rolpa and Salyan districts, which was constructed by local villagers in remembrance of local women martyrs Kumari Budha, Sunsara Budha and Lali Rokka.

Collective farming has particularly helped those de-facto single parent households where husbands are either away to serve PW or have gone away to work in remote urban centres. In some places, it has even managed to win the heart of such families whose male members are serving the reactionary military and police forces.

With the provisions of people's trials women now feel more secure at

their own home and outside as defaulting husbands and roving men are duly punished. Also, the women have become more aware of their legal rights and their oppressive state. On the other hand, repeated rape, molestation by police force and the protection given by the state to goons and rapists have exposed the class character and gender biasness of the state. This has enhanced political consciousness of the masses.

Earlier rape victims were stigmatised, but today with the institutionalisation of rape and murder perpetuated by the state, the earlier sense of shame has now given to a sense of class hatred, and rebellion against the state machinery. At one end, indiscriminate sexual harassment by the police has alienated even the ruling class women from the existing state, at the other end, it has strengthened co-operation among the oppressed masses against the state.

PW has given a revolutionary alternative life to young aspiring men and women. Women's lives, particularly in rural areas, are so monotonous, set in a repeated pattern of reproductive activities. The marriage being arranged at much younger age, they have no way of escaping from this beaten track life cycle. For aspiring women to venture out of village means almost getting trapped into prostitution or being trafficked to India (it is estimated that about 150,000 women from Nepal are trafficked to urban centres of India!) or are trapped to low paid sweat shops where sexual harassment is rampant. Thus for such aspiring women, the PW offers them challenging opportunity to work side by side with men on equal term and to prove their worth mentally and physically.

PW has also given alternative dignified life to many socially abandoned women, women abandoned by their husbands, women who have been left in lurch after losing virginity by cheaters, women who could not afford to get married, are found helping PW in various capacities. For them heroic death in the course of PW is more attractive than every death imposed on them by the society.

PW has helped in instilling progressive norms in people's lives. Today the new generation of women activists are defying traditional arranged marriage system and opting more and more for love marriages on ideological ground. They no longer fall head over heel for begetting sons; in fact, they are limiting the number of children to bare minimum to continue their revolutionary activities. Men are found to be more sympathetic and cooperative in running the family life. Today the Party has enforced strict monogamy on men. Thus, married men found indulging in illicit relationship are severely punished. Similarly, married

women found indulging in illicit relationship are also not spared. Those who have reasons to divorce are encouraged to divorce and remarry. There have been cases of remarriages. Women and men who have lost their spouses in war have remarried. Such cases, although the Party is encouraging limited.

PW has also ushered in creative literacy environment for women. As a result many new women are coming forward to share their experiences of PW, police atrocities etc. by writing their memoirs, poems, feature articles and theoretical articles in newspapers and journals.

PW has thoroughly exposed sham activities of NGOs / INGOs like Ama-Milan-Kendra' (Mothers get-together centres) that construct temples and spread religion in the name of organising women have been exposed and discredited.

Nepal being a country of diversities, PW has affected women of different nationalities like Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and others in different ways. PW has helped Indo-Aryan women to break the feudal restrictive life imposed by the puritan Hindu religion by unleashing their repressed energy. It has given meaningful lives to Tibeto-Burman and other women who are relatively free and have greater decision-making rights by giving them challenging works. PW has not only unshackled their class and gender oppression but also their nationality oppression. PW has particularly affected scheduled caste society, whose women are economically, socially, politically and sexually exploited by unleashing their hatred against the state.

PW has qualitatively and quantitatively changed women's movement in Nepal. While it has shifted the geography of women's movement from urban centers to rural areas, within urban areas, it has qualitatively changed women's movement from a feminist movement to a broad-based women's movement with class perspective as the key link. Today wider issues such as state repression on women, human rights of women, state repression on the masses, etc. are being focused along with other feminist issues. Rampant mass rape on rural women perpetuated by the state is seen to affect urban feminist activists as well. They are now increasingly being involved in Human Rights organisations to show their concern for human rights abuse of women and children. Such atrocities perpetuated by the state in revolutionary stronghold areas have resulted into sending of a team of exclusive six women journalists to probe women's condition in Rolpa, Rukum and other districts. They have exposed the atrocity let loose by the government in both national and international media.

PW has also forced different women's organisations (which was rarely possible before PW started) to come under the same platform to organise protest rallies or joint press conference against state repression, to rally against Beauty contests etc. The coming together of 7 women's organisations owing allegiance to different political parties to organise protest rally against brutal rape and torture of Devi Khadka in police custody is one such example.

## **ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN MOBILISING THE WOMEN**

In an over all context of Nepal, feudalism is the principle contradiction women have to face. As a result, remnants of feudal values tend to seep into even Party organisational structure. This affects women in particular, as they have to fight at two fronts, from class perspective and gender perspective. This becomes particularly challenging for women and Party organisation when women in leadership in various committees and guerrilla units are not easily accepted because of feudal prejudices. This is where the policy of CPN (Maoist) towards encouraging women's participating in PW at every level becomes important. Similarly with the increasing influence of imperialism in urban areas, there is danger for women to be swayed towards sectarian feminist influence. This is specially true for well to do educated women who have joined the movement revolting against the feudal domination at home. Because of their class background, they may be more sensitive to gender issues than class issues. This if not checked might lead to reformism or right deviation within the Party. Hence, the Party should counter this danger by bringing class element to play the leading role in women's movement. This can only be achieved if the Party genuinely follows 'mass line' as advocated by Chairman Mao whereby the Party is deeply rooted within the downtrodden mass while at the same time not antagonising anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces. However, one must also be careful that gender issues does not get postponed due to over-zealousness of applying class consciousness. This may lead to adventurism and "left" sectarianism in the Party. Hence both these extreme tendencies must be checked by making well-to-do educated women more class conscious and poor women, (men in particular), to be more gender sensitive. In addition, one must be theoretically clear that the aim of exclusive women's organisation in MLM organisation is mainly to prepare women activists who are mainly class conscious and are also gender sensitive so that they can effectively represent themselves in other mass



organisations and local United Fronts.

Objectively there are many grounds for women's participation in PW. However, subjectively they still lag behind men because of their long history of subjugation, their poor literacy level, their lesser exposure to outside world etc. Hence, subjective input by CPN (Maoist) on its women's members is very crucial.

Today PW faces a new situation where young men and women are fighting together in war front, in underground organisational works. In such a situation the question of sexual morality must be faced in such a way that one should not fall into anarchism in the name of sexual freedom. Also, because the culture is predominantly feudal one must be aware that conservatism may often prevail in the name of restraining sexual freedom. The Party has thus issued certain rules and regulations to handle such situations. In fact new cultural values and norms are being promoted to break away from feudal decadent culture.

Today PW has entered into the stage of preparing base areas. Hence, today the challenge lies in making women's power not only for destroying the old society but also for constructing a new progressive society. This can be done by enabling them to participate in productive activities and in decision-making body of the embryonic local anti-feudal, anti-imperialist New Democratic state in the prospective Base Areas. One should bear in mind that not solving or postponing women's issues at the Party level would hamper proletarian cause in a long run, as women are the most oppressed force among the oppressed classes and groups. Such shortcomings will ultimately affect the Party's and political line in terms of becoming either rightist or ultra-leftist. This is where the spirit of Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution must be inculcated into the party life right from the beginning. Namely the slogan "It is right to rebel" is an apt action oriented slogan which arms women to rebel against feudalism in the society and to fight against right and left tendencies in the Party.

## CONCLUSION

War, particularly class war, is by itself a great educator for the masses in the sense that it exposes the class character of the state. Particularly for women it also exposes the patriarchal nature of the feudal-bourgeois state. This is no less true in Nepal where women are being triply punished for challenging class structure and the patriarchal structure of the existing state by being tortured, raped and killed.

Since women suffer the most due to feudal economic relations,

backward and oppressive feudal culture (and perverted imperialist culture in urban areas) and patriarchal state machinery, they can be a reliable force for anti-feudal and anti-imperialist New Democratic Revolution. Women are also the most reliable force to push New Democratic Revolution up to Communism as their total emancipation can be realised only after abolishing private property which is possible only under Communism.

The women's question has become an important question for all the classes. In today's class war, imperialists are trying to use women as peacemakers to maintain their status quo while MLM forces are steeling women to violently hit against the system, which has been responsible for their double exploitation.

Let us therefore hail, "Working Women of all Countries, Unite. You have Nothing to Lose but Your Double Chains!!"

*The Worker*; No. 5; October 1999

<sup>1</sup> *Teej* is a day long fast imposed on women in order to pray for longevity of their husbands or for those unmarried they keep fast to pray for eligible husbands. Women in their bridal dresses and make-up and sing on this day in public areas.

# **The Question Of Women's Leadership In People's War In Nepal**

## **INTRODUCTION**

People's War (PW) in Nepal, which was initiated in February 1996 under the leadership of the CPN (Maoist), has been developing in leaps and bounds. The fire of revolution, which initially sparked in a few districts in Western Nepal, has swept all over the country. According to the Government's own account, out of 75 districts in Nepal, PW has affected 73 districts. All these gains could not have been possible without the mobilisation of the masses that are the backbone of PW in Nepal. The mobilisation of women in particular is apparent in PW in Nepal. Consider their daring feats. They were the first to break the tense silence throughout Nepal caused by the first historic strike that marked the initiation of PW in Nepal on 13 February, 1996. On the occasion of March 8th, 1996, the All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) [ANWA(R)] dared to organise a seminar (amidst strong speculation that they all would be arrested) and to voice the need for overall revolution to end women's oppression. It was after that bold step that other mass organisations started giving their own programmes. Dalit [*the lowest or untouchable castes* – ed.] women in Kalikot district in western Nepal were the first to snatch rifles from reactionary armed forces and hand them over to the local Party, thus accelerating PW in that district. The first daring historical jailbreak from the heavily fortified Gorkha district jail in March 2001 by six Maoist women is one of the rarest events, perhaps even in world history. Until the clamp down of emergency rule in November 2001, of all the mass organisations, the women's organisation was the most active and in the forefront of the movement. The successful antiliquor drive, which rocked the whole country in October 2001, in fact forced the government to negotiate with ANWA(R). Consider another feat; even before men in the Party started renouncing their parental properties to the Party, women of Rolpa started forsaking voluntarily their personal jewelry [*the main form of women's property* - ed.] to the local Party. After the promulgation of the Emergency, more and more women have been raped, killed, incarcerated and disappeared.

Despite all this there is a growing participation of women in PW in Nepal.

There are now objective grounds for developing women's leadership in all fronts. Realizing this, CPN (Maoist) has created a separate Women's Department under the Central Committee of the Party. The function of this department is to make policies to develop women's potentialities to higher levels so that more and more women are able to reach policy-making bodies in all the three fronts: Party, Army and United Front.

### **THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN CPN (MAOIST)**

The question of women's leadership became more and more important in Nepal as revolutionary united fronts were replacing the reactionary state machinery at village and district levels. It was seen that women were joining the movement in unprecedented numbers, showing tremendous endurance, sacrifice and devotion; however they lacked expert knowledge to lead the movement. With the establishment of a central level United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC) to co-ordinate the activities of all the united fronts at various levels, this question became all the more pertinent. Also with the creation of higher military formations within the People's Liberation Army, the question of women started being raised by the women themselves. This has become more important as military formations have now reached the level of brigade, and there are separate women's platoon and sections with the brigade. It is seen that while men are continuing to develop in the military field even when they have reached beyond 40 years of age, women are hardly seen to continue in this field beyond 25 years. While from the field, objective conditions were demanding the need of developing women's leadership qualities from the women cadres, within the Party itself there was a theoretical debate on women's role in the communist movement. It was in the Second National Conference, in the process of analysis and synthesis of achievements of PW in Nepal, which led to the adoption of Prachanda Path, that women's role in institutionalisation of continuous revolution and their role in preventing counter-revolution were seriously discussed. In fact the creation of separate Women's Department is the product of Prachanda Path. Women's role in the three instruments of revolution – Party, Army and United Front – was discussed. The Party being the most decisive amongst

the three instruments, the question of developing revolutionary women leaders in Communist Party was given prominence.

## **THE LEADERSHIP QUESTION AND WOMEN**

Leadership is basically actualisation of political ideology, hence in the Communist Party it is the command in ideology that determines the leadership quality. This quality is developed through continuous class struggle, inner-party struggle and inner-struggle. Hence, real tested leadership can only come in countries where there is class struggle, where the Party thrives on healthy inner-party struggle demanding a higher level of transformation of individuals through relentless inner-struggle. Indeed Rosa Luxemburg, Alexandra Kollontai, Clara Zetkin, Chiang Ching were all products of intense class struggle and inner-party struggle that was being waged in Germany, Russia and China in their time. And being women in addition, they had to wage a more complex inner-struggle than the men of their time.

The question of leadership is also linked to objective necessity and the chance factor. In the dialectical relationship between the two, it is true that the objective condition necessitates birth of a leader but the question of who emerges as a leader is left to chance. It is here that the women's leadership question becomes slightly complicated. It is seen that revolutionary communist movements have always unleashed women's fury, but they are not able to channelise this energy into producing enduring women communist leaders. The question has been raised again and again as to why there are so few women leaders in communist parties when Marxism offers such a deep penetrating analysis and solution to women's oppression. Hence the question arises as to why the chance factor is constrained in producing women leaders in communist parties despite growing objective conditions for it. This needs deep analysis.

### **Women Are Late Arrivals in the Political Arena**

Right from the period of the slavery system, men from the privileged class developed their skill in running political state affairs. They developed their leadership quality at the cost of women of both classes and the enslaved men. This continues to this day in some form or the other. Here it is worth remembering Engels, who said that the overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex and that men took command in the house also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children. By virtue of their sole right

over property, men became the rulers, and women upon losing their historic mother-right became the ruled. The prevailing division of labor according to which men undertook mental work while women were relegated to physical work led to cumulative experience of men in the field of analysis and synthesis of the world, while women were lost in the hidden world of household activities. Men thus monopolised the field of worldly knowledge; they have been actively involved in not only defining the world but changing it too. Consider this -- women got voting rights long after it was achieved by men. Even today, in 21st century, women in Kuwait do not have the right to vote. With the imperialist countries backing religious medieval feudal rulers like the Taliban in Afghanistan (now replaced by a coalition of smaller feudal lords under Hamid Karzai) and sheiks in Gulf countries, women are restrained from entering public life. Also in Western countries, despite much noise being made by feminists, there are few women leaders in political parties. Take the case of Nepal, where women are denied the right to rule right from the womb, because of the feudal monarchical system prevalent here. All these have a cumulative effect on the struggle for developing women's leadership in political parties, even in the communist parties whose history is comparatively recent and which are so antagonistic to the prevailing mainstream political parties.

### **Prevailing Mode of Production is not Favorable**

The base and superstructure of the present society is based on exploitation in general and in particular on exploitation of women's reproductive and domestic labour. In property relations women are looked upon as maintainers of men's property and producers of sons to pass on the property within a male lineage. The prevailing superstructure, such as the social, cultural, educational, and political system, are all geared to support this exploitation. Take the example of the marriage institution. It is an alliance of convenience for men to perpetuate their hegemonism in property relations. For women the same alliance in fact marginalises them to domestic slavery. Sadly this holds true amongst the communists too, although to a lesser degree.

Nepal with strong left movements has periodically produced many women activists, but they seem to vanish as soon as they are recognised. One of the most apparent reasons is the institution of marriage, which has robbed us of promising women leaders. People's War seems to be changing that pattern. However, even within PW the question of continuity of women's leadership keeps coming up, especially when

they get married and decide to have children. This is because in countries like Nepal, where the feudal patriarchal system is yet more oppressive than the capitalist patriarchal system in advanced countries, the married life of women communists can be more complex. Although the element of the notion of private property is slowly disappearing in Nepal with the waging of PW, however, the cultural root of feudalism eventually creeps in in many forms, such as the conventional division of labor in the name of necessity. Added to this is the unilateral burden a woman has to carry when she becomes a mother. With the birth of every child she sinks deeper into domestic slavery. In fact many women who have been active in People's War in Nepal are found to complain that having babies is like being under disciplinary action, because they are cut off from the Party activities for a long period. In this way many bright aspiring communist women are at risk of being lost in oblivion, even after getting married to the comrades of their choice. This is specially so in white dominated areas [areas still dominated by the local traditional elite – ed.] where women seldom get support system from the mass as well as from the Party to sustain themselves in their reproductive years. However, it is heartening to see that this problem is being solved in the base areas of Rolpa and Rukum, where the mass support and the consolidation of the Party has made it possible for the Party and masses to support such maternal burdens of women leaders. Another aspect of Nepalese feudal society is that there is a strong pressure on women to bear children, especially sons. With the launching of PW this aspect has been negated to some level, however, there is still pressure to have at least one child.

There is also the tendency to create pressure on women cadres to get married covertly or overtly as unmarried women draw lots of suspicion from men as well as women for their unmarried status. This results in marriages against their wishes or before they are ready to get married. Also there is a tendency to take sexual offenses more seriously than political offenses.

### **Women's Struggle Is More Complex Than That Of Men**

For communist women, it is not enough for them to participate in class struggle, inner-party struggle, and inner-struggle. Often they may remain in the minority even if they belong to the majority line within the party. And because they are the product of this patriarchal structure, their inner-struggle consists in not only struggle against themselves as individuals but also struggle against the effect of patriarchal values on them, such

as fatalistic tendency, inferiority complex, guilt syndrome, victim syndrome, etc. They have to face an even more complex struggle if they happen to be single, divorced or married more than once. This is well documented in Alexandra Kolontai's collection of articles. In fact she represents the best example of revolt against such marriages. She left her first husband and child in order to concentrate more on revolutionary work, then later she left her second (communist) husband on the ground of his stereotyped expectation of the marriage alliance. And because of her rebellion against conventional marriages she not only faced difficulties with the bourgeois society but from conservative communists as well. As a result, Alexandra Kollontai is more known for the "glass of water theory" (the theory that sex should be as easy and uncomplicated as drinking glass of water) among the conservative communists than her contributions to the communist movement and the proletarian women's movement. Take another example, that of Chiang Ching. She had to face slander from the bourgeois press and personalities because of her so-called but propagated past marriages, and even within the Party she was not received kindly. Chiang Ching had to agree to political isolation for many years as a condition for her to marry Mao. This decision was taken when the rightist Liu Shao Chi was in the Party headquarters.

### **Manifestation Of Patriarchal Values In Communist Party**

Since the feminist movement is the product of the bourgeois revolution, quite often communist parties tend to become hyper-sensitive to women's issues. As a result they fall prey to patriarchal values even while agreeing in theory to women's liberation. This is manifested in many ways. For example, instead of women being taken as reliable long-term equal partners in the communist movement, women's role is taken as a supportive one. As a result, the Party is often found overemphasising the class struggle at the cost of gender exploitation, forgetting the dialectical relationship between the two. There have been cases of delaying the formation of separate women's organisation or even temporarily dismissing existing women's organisation within communist parties. In parties where separate women's organisation exists, there are cases where the women's mass front is not given the required degree of freedom so as to make their own plans and programmes, thus robbing them of initiative and creative power. This ultimately breeds alienation and tailism in the Party. This can also take place by not coordinating the women's programme with the Party programme and as a result the Party



programme gets priority over the women's programme. Conservatism within the Party can also be seen from the tendency to relegate women cadres to only women-related work, thereby robbing them of the chance to develop in Party policy matters and other fields.

In the practical front, this leads to spontaneity whereby women's issues are addressed but not implemented because one leaves it to circumstances, leading to gradualism. Often it is seen that the Party does not actively intervene in the existing traditional division of labor between men and women whereby men take to mental work while women are left to do physical labor. This is also manifested in taking men and women as absolute equals by not being sensitive to women's special condition and their special needs. This becomes all the more apparent when women are menstruating or are in the reproductive period.

### **Lack Of Subjective Effort On The Part Of Women Cadres**

Women have to wage a longer struggle because of their double oppression. However, due to lack of subjective efforts they lose half way. For example, where they have successfully rebelled against feudal values, they have not been able to sustain themselves in class struggle. And where they have been able to wage class struggle, they have not been able to sustain in inner-party struggle. And by not participating or participating poorly in inner-party struggle they lose sharpness on ideology, thus getting robbed of their chance to determine the course of the communist movement, which has so much relevance to their own liberation. Their lack of subjective effort is manifested in many ways. In the field of ideology, they fall prey to pragmatism, economism, sectarianism because they are not serious enough to study theoretical knowledge and be involved in inner-party struggle to overcome their objective conditions, which in turn breeds these tendencies because of their past objective conditions.

In the practical field, they often fall into tailism whereby they follow the directives of the Party blindly without questioning, just as traditional women have been following their fathers when unmarried, and their husbands when married, and their sons when widowed. They thus become the victims of circumstances. This manifests in unplanned motherhood, which affects them most if they are in the military field. It manifests in following the husband's political line blindly instead of developing one's own political line, thereby affecting their independent political life. By not being assertive of their rights, they fall into the trap of traditional division of labour. As a result they covertly become the

vehicle of traditional conservative ideas leading to counter-revolution. In many cases they take marriage and motherhood as a break in their political/military career as if it is temporary work. Similarly they become willing partners to their husband's field of work thereby losing hold of their own previous work. Hence frequent change of place and work affects them more than men. The effect of all these tendencies leads to developing an inferiority complex among women which is counter-productive to the revolution.

### **Men's Unwillingness To Give Up Their Special Privileges**

While women cadres have the problem of asserting themselves, men cadres have the problem of relinquishing the privileged position bestowed on them by the patriarchal structure. This is manifested in many ways. This is mainly seen in the form of formal acceptance of women's leadership, while in essence not accepting their leadership. Thus there are delays made in establishing women's leadership in the Party, PLA and United Front. This also results in their being impatient with women's mistakes and general lack of skill in fields from which women have been excluded. Often they relegate women's issues to women as if it does not concern them. This is manifested in not reading literature on women's issues, and not taking part in implementing programmes given by the women's mass front. Sometimes this is covertly seen in the form of being overprotective about safety of women cadres when it is not warranted and by undertaking women's mental work on their behalf. This is also seen in their sticking to old traditional division of labour, without relinquishing their monopoly on mental work and relegating women to everyday drudgery work. Not wanting to give up their privileged position they tend to discourage promising wives from taking up independent work, which would take them far off from their husbands.

### **POLITICAL LINE AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

It is the correct ideology and policy of the communist party that will determine the quality of women communist leaders produced and the path of women's liberation. It was the correct political line of the Bolshevik Party headed by Comrade Lenin that produced fine women communist leaders like Alexandra Kolontai, Clara Zetkin, Inessa Armand, Krupskaya, etc. It was the correct political line because of which communist women leaders like Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg

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were able to evolve the concept of celebrating 8th March as International Working Women's Day every year globally, the decision being taken by the first international socialist women's conference in Stockholm in the year 1910. And it is being followed by not only communists but also the bourgeoisie (in their own way) even till this day.

It was the correct political line of Comrade Rosa Luxemburg of exposing and struggling against Bernstein in her book "Reform or Revolution" and later her struggle against Kautsky that brought her to the notice of revolutionary communists of the world. She dared to warn Lenin that bureaucracy may breed in the structure of the Party if the question of centralism and democracy are not understood in their dialectical relationship and under the specific condition of the individual country where it is applied. With the occurrence of counter-revolution in previous socialist states and with the tendencies of bureaucracy which seem to sap revolutionary parties engaged in PW time and again, her warning seems to have relevance even today.

Similarly, it was the correct political line carried by Comrade Mao which heralded Cultural Revolution that unleashed women's fury. It was a woman who put up the first poster denouncing Liu Shao Chi heralding the revolt against rightist headquarters. It was the Cultural Revolution that unleashed Comrade Chiang Ching's suppressed leadership quality making her one of the resolute fighters against the capitalist roaders until her death (or murder?). One must also remember that in the period of occupation of headquarters by the rightist Liu Shao Chi, he was the one who ordered women to go back home in order to solve the unemployment problem that was looming large. It was the rightist policy, Perestroika, and the capitalist policy of Deng which slowly introduced commercialisation of women thus bringing back prostitution, gambling, beauty contests, etc. in Russia and China.

Having said all this, let us not forget that just as women themselves are divided into different classes, so are the communist women divided along rightist, centrist, and revolutionary lines. Due to anti-working women's liberation policy taken by the rightist and centrist line, those women who belong to these lines are eventually marginalised in their own parties and remain exposed outside the party because of their anti-women's stand. Whereas those women who stood by the revolutionary line even while failing to make revolution in their own country remain popular. Take the case of Rosa Luxemburg, who is the most popular woman communist leader so far. She was killed before she could realise her dream; this all the more enhanced respect for her as a devoted woman

communist leader in the communist world. Similarly it was the tough stand taken by Chiang Ching who defended Mao's revolutionary line even in her captivity until her death in revisionist China that made her the defiant heroine.

It is interesting to observe that revolutionary communist women have always been on the offensive when they are fighting against the revisionists. The reason may be because they are painfully aware that revisionism breeds bureaucratisation, which in turn strengthens patriarchal values, ultimately negating women in politics.

It should be noted that in a third world country like Nepal, where class differentiation is not sharp enough, inner-party struggle may often appear in the form of gender, ethnic, regional struggle. Hence gender issue becomes quite an important component of the class issue. In such a case, dismissing the gender issue as an alien force will ultimately affect class struggle.

## **PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

It is time and again seen that women masses do come in a tide to participate in revolutionary movements, producing some potential women leaders. But this tide along with the prospective women leaders seems to recede once the revolution is completed or is defeated. The chief reason behind this phenomenon is the existence of the concept of private property. As long as private property remains, women will always have to go back to tend individual household activities, maintaining private property for men, no matter how many social revolutions take place. Hence the concept of continuous revolution until one reaches communism has strategic relevance for women, because it is only then that private property gets abolished, unleashing the creativity of women. That is why it is important to make conscious efforts by revolutionary parties of the world to create a conducive environment for developing revolutionary women communist leaders so that they can play a role as catalyst agents in arriving at communism. Hence the question of developing women communist leaders cannot be left to chance, they need to be consciously nurtured, cultivated and safeguarded.

## **SOME EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN NEPAL**

Realising the importance of revolutionary women and their role in the communist movement, CPN(Maoist) has come forward with some

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encouraging results. Today there are several women in the Central Committee of the Party. There are dozens of women at the regional level and hundreds in the district levels, and several thousands in the area and cell levels in the Party. In the People's Liberation Army there are many women commanders, vice commanders in different sections within the brigade, platoons, squads and militia. There are separate women's sections in the brigade: women platoons, women squad teams, women militia teams functioning in the field. In the United Revolutionary People's Council, which is an embryonic central people's government organizing committee, there are four women out of 37 members. Women's participation in all levels of People's Councils has been made mandatory.

Just to give some idea about their participation in different fields, let us take the Western region of Nepal. This region alone has 1500 women's units. The total number of women membership in the women's mass organisation is six hundred thousand. In the military field there are ten women section commanders in the main force, two women platoon commanders in the secondary force and several militia commanders in the basic force. The team commander of the health section of the battalion force is a woman. The women there have started a campaign called "One village, one unit, one house, one friend." This has helped in organizing and politicizing village after village. Similarly in the field of production there is a campaign called "Where there is contact, there is organisation; where there is organisation, there is production." Hence women are also involved in production activities. They are actively involved in conducting people's courts where informers, drunkards, gamblers, womanisers, and cheaters are punished. In such trials usually local women militias are actively involved together with the villagers. One can therefore say that the objective basis for producing women leaders in various fields are ripening in western region.

Today more and more women are encouraged to rebel against their oppressive marriages, and politically incorrect marriages. Take the case of Com. Shilpa, who was first a commander in a guerrilla squad and later a sub-regional committee member of the Party and vice-chairman of a district level people's committee. She had a heroic death while laying an ambush against the reactionary armed forces in May 2002. She dared to denounce and divorce her husband who had reneged against the revolution after being captured. There is an increasing trend of widow remarriages [*condemned by orthodox Hindu tradition* – ed.]. The definition of the family of martyrs has now been extended to those wives

of martyred comrades who have remarried without forsaking the revolutionary cause. This has indirectly helped widows of martyred men to remarry without feeling guilty. Take the example of Com. Shilu, the commander of the historic women jail breakers in Gorkha in March, 2001. She has remarried another comrade after losing her husband Bhim Sen Pokharel who got martyred while giving protection to Com. Basu, the first martyred politburo member of CPN(Maoist). There have been cases of husbands and wives being given challenging works. It is worth mentioning that Com. Phul Maya BK, who was a section commander of a battalion in the historic Dang Barrack attack on November 23, 2001, was martyred along with her husband Com. Bijok in the same battle. Also it is worth mentioning that the political commissar for the Satbaria barrack attack in Dang in April 2002 was a woman. In the course of promulgation of the Emergency and military mobilisation, many husbands, wives and sons and daughters have been martyred, this also indicates the level of politicalisation of the family in Nepal.

## CONCLUSION

From the above, it can be concluded that the importance of revolutionary women's leadership in the communist party has strategic importance as they are a reliable, long term and mass based force which will help push the communist movement from New Democratic Revolution to socialism, and from socialism to stateless and propertyless communism where complete women's emancipation is guaranteed. Talking on the relationship between communism and emancipation of women, Inessa Armand has rightly said that if the emancipation of women is unthinkable without communism, then communism is unthinkable without the full emancipation of women. The concepts of right to rebel, cultural revolution, continuous revolution, overall revolution, mass based politics etc., all have strong appeal and application for women because of their double oppressed status. Their double oppression and the continued false promise of equality given to them by the ruling class (including the revisionist left parties) keeps them alert and on their toes to check any counter-revolution or revisionism, because they have seen the gains of women's rights slowly eroding with every capitalist stand taken by the Party in both Russia and China.

The Communists should be politically aware that if patriarchal values are not checked periodically through rectification campaigns then it may slowly breed bureaucracy in the Party. The result of bureaucracy in the Party is that it gets cut off from the masses. Once the Party becomes an

end in itself, serving the interest of its own existence, it will eventually strengthen revisionism. This will result in the Party becoming the vanguard of the exploiting class instead of the exploited class, thus losing both class and gender perspective.

For the communist movement to flourish it is not enough to produce individual outstanding women communist leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg or Clara Zetkin, but also equally important to produce women communist companions like Krupskaya and Chiang Ching, who were leaders in their own field, who stood by their husbands who were leaders of the communist movement. They were not only providing their husbands with comfort and companionship but were also actively engaged in two-line struggle in the party. We also need women like Jenny Marx who stood by her husband like a rock in the hours of political and personal turmoil, and helped him in whatever capacity she had. For in order to preserve the gains of revolution and its continuous advancement, we need to not only produce revolutionary women leaders but it is also equally important to sustain and preserve revolutionary communist men leaders. Let us not forget that it was also revolutionary men like Karl Marx, Engels, August Bebel, Lenin, Mao etc. who provided deep analysis of women's oppression and have shown the path for women's emancipation.

It is important to note that just as communist women know that for every gain in the proletarian people's power there is a relative gain in women's power, similarly communist men should know that the revolution and the gains of revolution can only be preserved and furthered when more and more women join and lead the revolution. Similarly, just as the proletarian movement needs the input of all those who have rebelled against their class outlook, the proletarian women's movement needs the input of all those who have not only rebelled against their class outlook but also against their stereotyped sexist outlook. Hence, the alliance between revolutionary men and women is not only to be desired but is also historically necessary. This is all the more necessary in producing revolutionary women communist leaders.

Lastly, it is important to note Mao's remark - "Keep being dissatisfied, the world belongs to the dissatisfied." This is all the more true for women revolutionary leaders who have to tread a longer and more complex path of class struggle, inner-party struggle and inner-struggle.

This article was published by *Monthly Review* in 2003 with the following note:

*"Comrade Parvati is Central Committee Member and Head of Women's*

Department of CPN (Maoist).

*The most recent issue of The Worker, Issue No.8 dated January 2003, contains several very interesting articles and a quite remarkable one, which we reproduce here. Comrade Parvati, head of the Women's Department of the CPN(Maoist), first came to our attention with her "Women's Participation in People's War in Nepal" in The Worker No. 5 (October, 1999)*

*That piece combined clear thinking with strong organisation of the material, revealing the presence of a political understanding of the first order. But her own distinctive voice could not be heard behind the rigidity of the formulaic language.*

*In the intervening three years and more since "Women's Participation..." appeared, the People's War went from a regional phenomenon well beneath the daily level of popular awareness for the great majority of Nepalese to the foremost political fact of life for everyone in the country. And thousands and thousands died; some in battle but most murdered or "disappeared" by the regime's police and the Royal Nepal Army. In the crucible of struggle, and under conditions few reading this now can even imagine, Comrade Parvati has emerged as a revolutionary thinker of the first order. She has, perhaps in the stubble of a field after the rice harvest or disturbing a peasant's dog to sit in the porch of the one room house when it first becomes light, been reading ... Rosa Luxemburg and Alexandra Kollontai. The results of her study and practice emerge in the piece we now publish here, lightly edited. Ingrained habits of formulaic expression have by no means disappeared, but the brilliance of the thought emerges. Marriage and private property are placed under question. The persistence of male privilege within the Communist Party of Nepal(Maoist) is directly addressed. And a thesis of immense power and importance is advanced: that the bureaucratic degeneration (and consequent counter-revolution) within the Soviet system and the failure of the Cultural Revolution (and consequent turn to capitalist social relations) in China have one cause in common - the failure of the respective movements to address properly in practice the question of gender oppression and women's leadership. Comrade Parvati's own voice now rings through clear as a bell, and it is, we believe, well worth your attention."*



# Women's Participation In People's Army

*"Nothing is impossible,  
if you dare to scale the heights."*

*– Mao Tse-tung*

## INTRODUCTION

The historic People's War [PW] in Nepal was declared the leadership of CPN (Maoist) in 1996 with mere sticks, sickles, khukris and literally two guns<sup>2</sup>. Today after eight years of PW, they have GPMG, LMG, SMG, SLR, and rocket launchers. Similarly in the initial phase of PW there were defense squads, today it has expanded to the level of two divisions, 7 brigades, 19 battalions, several companies, platoons, sections and hundred thousands of militias. Earlier, the local defense force was engaged with local police force, but today it's fighters have to face American backed Royal Nepalese Army, which is also called as '*Royal American Army*'. Amongst many specificities of Nepalese PW, women's phenomenal participation in People's Liberation Army [PLA], particularly in direct combat, is one such important characteristic.

In the historic third expanded meeting of CPN (Maoist) in 1995, it was decided that at least two women would be made mandatory in each defense squad. Today they constitute about one third of PLA in Nepal. Qualitatively they have reached the level of commanders and vice-commanders up to company level and as political commissars at the brigadier level. The recent martyrdom of Comrade Sapan Shiela, who was a company commander is one such example. She met a heroic death while retreating from military operation after bravely defending her company to safety.

In several daring daylight urban guerilla actions in Terai, Kathmandu and urban centres, women have participated in capturing banks, selective annihilation of enemies and destroying key points of the state. At militia level, their participation has been phenomenal, sometimes even surpassing that of men. They constitute important vanguards to protect several district level revolutionary people's councils and at the same time consolidating base areas by participating in several construction activities. This way, they have become part of the spinalcord of the new emerging state from their earlier spineless position. The concept of "one

citizen, one army” brought by the Directory for Administration of People’s Power (in the form of *United Revolutionary People’s Council, 2004*) makes it all the more relevant to militarise women who hold half of the sky.

Today the development of PW has reached the stage of preparatory period for offensive from the equilibrium state. Since the coming period is a decisive period for the Nepalese revolution, it is important to generalise and synthesise the experiences of women combatants in PLA, and to know the scope, limitations and challenges they face. However, before putting these, it is worth noting how women have participated in wars in general.

## **WOMEN AND WARS**

Ever since the end of matriarchal primitive system, the contradiction between the human race and nature has shifted to contradiction within the human race in the form of class wars. In pursuit of private wealth, profit, women were relegated to biological function of reproducing and maintaining the classes. Under such a situation, their participation in war as combatants has been generally supportive. They are seen as morale boosters (such as famous actresses and celebrities sent to war-fronts), as hecklers (by making gifts of bangles to men symbolising their loss of masculinity) as logistic supporters (as was widely mobilised in World War I and II) as nurses (like, Florence Nightingale) as spies (like, Matahari). Where they have actively participated in war-fronts as combatants, they have done at a very limited and individual level, that too under sheer compulsions such as Laxmi Bai in India, under sheer desperation such as Joan of Arch in France. In such cases, many of them had to join war wearing men’s clothes in order to hide their gender identity. The much published Amazon women fighters in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Dahomey Kingdom was in fact a result of desperate act whereby armed regiment of women were placed at the rear so as to make Dahomey’s force appear longer and bigger. However, in actual fight, the king discovered that they fought valiantly. This resulted in recruiting women in regular army. Even in Tamil liberation movement, the LTTE women were at first recruited as logistic supporter or as secondary force to assist the main men’s force. It was only after they proved their prowess that they were incorporated into more visible frontal battles.

## WOMEN AND CLASS WARS

It takes revolutionary class wars to mobilise women to the scale and quality that outclasses earlier participation in wars. Class struggles are not only just, total, and holistic wars, but they also address socio-economic problems thereby not only shaking the foundation of reactionary states but also family structure, deeply entrenched in religion. Unlike ethnic, religious, regional wars, class wars are not divisive, instead they lead to universality the more they develop to higher levels. They draw their strength from collective actions of the masses, particularly the oppressed masses, amongst which women constitute the largest encompassing oppressed mass. Also the application of dictatorship by the revolutionary states over those who oppress them and safeguarding the democracy of the oppressed masses has big appeal for women. Such states not only consolidate their productive functions but also safeguard their reproductive functions.

Direct participation of militant proletariat women in the Paris Commune in 1971 marks the first watershed in oppressed women's movement. The lining of them together with their male comrades before the firing squads of invading reactionary force proves the height of hatred generated amongst reactionary forces for their participation in the revolution.

Similarly, women combatants' participations in Soviet Union during World War II while fighting against Nazi occupation were phenomenal. The following figure gives the idea:

"The official figures state that about 800,000 women participated in the Red army and about another 200,000 in partisan (irregular) forces. These figures put women at about 8 percent of overall forces (with 12 million men). Of the total of 800,000, about 500,000 reportedly served at the fronts, and about 250,000 received military training in Komsomol schools." (Goldstein; 2001; Pp.- 65).

In China, exclusive women militias were formed to attack on areas controlled by Japanese force during their occupation in China and later to fight against the white army who continued to raid it's borders even after the birth of Republican China.

Vietnam war is in fact marked by women's high participation. The picture of burly big American soldiers being led by small, scantily clad Vietnamese women keeps haunting American rulers even today. The following description gives the quantity and quality of their participation in Vietnam's national war. "Madame Dinh was made a general of the

People's Liberation Armed Forces [PLAF] based on her credentials as a co-founder of the NLF and the leader of the Ben Tre Uprising. Her position also reflected the significance of women in PLAF ... about 40 percent of the PLAF regimental commanders were women." (Barry; 1996; Pp.- 47).

## **PROTRACTED PEOPLE'S WAR AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

*"Women are the powerhouses of the War."*

*– Ho Chi Minh*

The very nature of class and sex oppression of women is protracted, thus this makes Protracted People's War [PPW] very attractive to oppressed women. Although PPW is a methodology of attaining New Democratic state, but within this process, continuous transformation, breaking down feudalist culture, and controlling imperialist culture helps women in realising their worth as dignified human beings. Distinct features of PPW, such as learning warfare through war, putting ideology before weapon, Party over army, the need for mass based local initiative, self-reliance, attacking on weakest link of the enemy or inducing enemy to make mistakes, attacking when in strong position and retreating when in weak position, the concept of base area – all these are conducive to women's participation as this warfare is the methodology used by weaker section of the society to fight against stronger state forces. The progressive development of war to the advanced formation, incorporating interests of various oppressed groups gives women enough scope for improving and consolidating their newly acquired skill of fighting. Not only this, PPW prepares women for insurrection war where speed, surprise and concentrated efforts are needed for the final capture of the central state power.

In the specific condition of Nepal, the propertyless status of women together with their gross negligence by the state despite being the backbone of self sustaining peasant economy has prepared ground for women joining in mass in PLA. Being left alone to tend the young children and the old-aged, while men go to mercenary service or as labourers in urban centres of Nepal and India, they are like de-facto single women who have to fight against hunger in remote difficult terrain. Also the tendency to get daughters married at young age to beat poverty and the burden of chastity makes young unmarried women attracted towards joining PLA. They are thus like what Marx had said about the

proletariats, that they have nothing to loose but their chains!

## **ROLE OF PLA IN TRANSFORMING WOMEN-COMBATANTS' CHARACTER**

*"The communist revolution i  
s the most radical rupture  
with traditional property relations,  
no wonder that it's development involves  
the most radical rupture with traditional idea."  
– Marx and Engels*

PLA has not only transformed women in essence but also in form. Essentially it has given meaning, value, respect, dignity not only to their lives but to their deaths as well. Women have been taken for granted for too long. Today hooligans, goondas, womenisers cannot dare to come near Maoist women unless accompanied with armed reactionary force. It has turned insecure women to insurgents. In form, it has totally undressed them from their feudal frills to functional unisex dress. Today she is not only worried about what ideology she carries in her brain, but is also worried about her health and reproductive system. It has not only helped her break away from the four walls of her house, it has also stretched her reach to four corners of the country. It has transformed her from anonymous domestic slave to a very visible rebellious professional fighter. Earlier she had no idea of time, slogging from dawn to past midnight Today she is recording time while planting time bomb. Earlier she could only pull other's hair, today it is teaching her to pull the triggers of guns. From god-fearing woman she has transformed onto a fierceful woman! Earlier she only shed her menstrual blood, today she is bleeding to throw away monarchy system.

Fighting on the strength of ideology and using warfare skill, her body language has changed to that of a very confident, smart and dignified woman; from illiterate woman she has become literate with enriched vocabulary of ideological and military terminologies. Today she has became philosophical about life and death as the two sides of the same coin, defining them in terms of necessity and chance, etc. She understands dialectics in terms of seeing positive in negative and vice versa. She understands the laws of contradiction in terms of identifying principal enemies and secondary enemies, she knows how to judge things in relative terms, in contradiction and in leaps and bounds. She now knows

relationship between state and government, between imperialist and Third World countries and how American imperialism affects Nepal. Thus, PLA has enabled village woman to be more modern and educated than urban woman! Indeed women in PLA are found to be more forward than women in frontal organisations of the Party. The rate of transformation in PLA is so fast that women hesitate to leave this field when their health problem or reproductive function comes on their way, or are transferred to other fields. At practical level, it has made it possible for women to take flight from kitchen to communism. It has expanded her sphere of activities from uterus to universality. All these remind one of Comrade Lenin's saying that 'war brings transformation in 10 days what it takes 10 years in normal time'.

## **ROLE OF WOMEN-COMBATANTS IN TRANSFORMING THE NATURE OF PLA**

Strategic participation of women in PLA has not only made PW wholesome, it has also lent mass character to the army by making it multi-functional, multi-character thus making it truly people's army in appearance as well as in essence. The infusion of women in PLA has made it not only the centre of fighting, but also organisation and production. This is because multi-faceted work that women had been carrying out at home and at community level earlier, has now taken public character after they have joined PLA thus helping it to be more multi-functional.

### **In Making PLA A Better Fighting Force**

Women's participation has made fighting force more tenacious, disciplined, and high cultured and more focused. In field, it has been generally found that where men combatants gave up, women continued to fight, and where men left their weapons, women combatants clutched to their guns even in most adverse circumstances. It was also found that where men hesitated to go in offensive assault, women were found to go for it without looking for excuses. They seldom refused the task given, they would always try it. Also during set backs, it was women who showed more patience and sense of composure, while men tended to feel restless and irritable. They thus help in shedding off go easy attitude amongst men combatants. Also their involvement has self-cleansing effect on PLA, as drinking, gambling, cheap entertainments

and womanising cannot go hand in hand with their participation in war. It has also boosted men's morale in PLA while demoralising enemy's army. Lastly, their infusion makes PLA a gender-friendly and class-conscious force. This gets more reinforced when women are brutally tortured, raped and killed by the reactionary force.

Women's participation has made PLA more approachable to reactionary army's families, thus increasing its perusal and politicising power to discourage their men from fighting with PLA and to join it instead. It has also enabled the PLA to get wider and deeper intelligent networks at local level. By infusing women in PLA it has catalysed the process of integration between different castes, races, ethnic groups, regional groups through inter-marriages between these communities, thus mitigating non-class distinctions and making PLA more class conscious and multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-racial.

Women's participation in PLA not only helps in checking militarist tendency but also helps it from drifting to roving guerillas. It has made the job of militarising the masses easy. PLA has started giving basic military training to the masses. In fact CPN (Maoist) has recently made a policy of militarising its various front organisations due to military assault on them by the reactionary forces. As a result, there are militias in all the mass-fronts that have the duty to protect them whenever they give their programmes. It has enabled barricaded army to become bare footed army.

## **In Making PLA A Better Organised Force**

What makes PLA distinct from the reactionary army is that it also acts as an organisational, political force. In fact PLA is essentially an ideological army with military face. In hostile areas, it is the PLA that organises the masses in which women combatants' input is very vital. This is because women combatants are more readily accepted and believed, thus it helps in removing initial fear of the masses. Their presence in people's court makes masses, particularly women, more at ease and more hopeful of egalitarian justice. This increases the organisational power of PLA. Also the multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-regional and multi-gender character of PLA enriched by inter-caste, inter-racial, inter-regional, inter-ethnic marriages together with widow re-marriage makes PLA a real social engineer in removing decadent

monolithic feudal culture of the backward society.

## **In Making PLA**

### **A More Production-Oriented Force**

The existence of base area even while at war makes it possible for PLA to work as production force for consolidating the base area. Infusion of women in PLA has made production work more diversified. By involving women combatants in otherwise male dominated construction works such as building roads, bridges, houses, culverts, irrigation channels etc. and by involving men combatants in otherwise women dominated work such as collecting fodder, fuels, food processing, mess works etc., PLA has been able to break the traditional division of work, thus helping the masses to identify with the new progressive culture. Their infusion in PLA has also made production work more pleasurable, complimentary, cooperative and catering to all sections of masses such as men, women, children, old aged and disabled. There have been many instances where PLA has helped single-headed families to complete their seasonal works in peak hours. Due to the presence of women combatants, people find PLA more approachable as it is much easier for them to communicate their problems through women combatants than through men. Thus women's participation in PLA has made the job of production work more community-oriented, more rooted to all the sections of the society.

### **WOMEN-COMBATANTS AND ROYAL NEPAL ARMY**

*"Know the enemy and know yourself  
and you can fight a hundred battles."*

— Sun Tzu

The Royal Nepal Army [RNA] is, in fact, one of the most hated armed forces of the old state, for the masses in general and women in particular and specifically for the women combatants in PLA. The reason is that it is the traditional support base for the monarchy system that has always repressed democratic movements in Nepal since 1951 when oligarchic Rana system was overthrown (of late, it has become puppet of US-British imperialism, thus losing even semblance of its nationalistic character). For women in particular, this institution represents the guardian of much hated feudal patriarchy, which keeps them under the darkness of ignorance, oblivion under the garb of religion. For women combatants in PLA, it represents a force against which they have to not



only wage class war but also gender war in order to overcome rape, torture and death.

One universal phenomenon is that reactionary class always underestimates the strength of people. This is all the more true for women in general and oppressed women in particular. Hence, RNA has been generally under-estimating the strength of women in PLA. However, that is changing. In the initiation period of PW the police force took men combatants more seriously, by killing them in mass but not yet killing women combatants in such a scale. They were often jailed and were raped sporadically. When the concept of armed police force came, then there was a marked increase in rape and torture cases along with sporadic killings. In the latest move when RNA came into the scene, there has been a marked increase in brutality on women; now women combatants, cadres, even sympathisers are getting raped and killed. The perpetuation of mass rape by RNA is seen amongst the people too, which often go under-reported, or not reported at all.

RNA has always looked at women combatants of PLA from the sexist point of view. They see their involvement in PLA in the form of gaining sexual gratification with men combatants. There are many instances where they have highlighted the discovery of condoms in jungles in media. Rude, dirty abuses and obscene body languages showed on women PLA in war zones has at one end made women more determined, committed and fierce while fighting against them, at the other end it steels the determination of male PLA cadres to take revenge on the reactionary army. The brutal rape, torture and murder of women-PLA cadres has made PLA more gender-sensitive, thus reinforcing class unity while it has made reactionary army more brutal, militarist and sexist in attitude.

Increasing brutality on women, in fact, has increased their participation in PLA. This has forced RNA to reverse its earlier policy of refraining women in RNA. Recently they have advertised for recruiting women in various posts. How far this is going to increase the firepower of RNA can be judged by experiences in other countries where they have already recruited women in their respective armies.

There is an increasing trend of recruiting women in reactionary armed forces of states all over the world. This is because increasing attack on dwellings, oppressed nationalities and weaker nations, that goes hand in hand with privatisation, liberalisation and imperialism has drawn more and more women out of their homes (together with their children) to

fight against local authority, state authority, imperialist authority. However, in most of the countries that deploy women in armed combat missions, women's position is still secondary, more for decorative value than for actual fighting. Repeated cases of sexual harassment and rape are time and again reported in the American Army force. The experience of much referred women combatants in Israel also needs to be demystified. They are not deployed in combat (Goldstein; 2001; Pp.-86). They are used as secondary force, mostly in civilian department as nurses, para-medicos, type-writers, driving tanks etc. Women combatants in rich countries like USA, are seldom sent in direct combat zones since experiences have shown that men combatants tend to show excessive concern for the well-being of their women combatants at the expense of the mission. In Third World countries like in India the experience is even worse. Women armed forces are humiliated and often ridiculed "Petticoat battalion" by their men (Singh 2003: P16). The class nature, hence the patriarchal outlook and henceforth the bureaucratic structure of the army will not allow full participation of women in combat zone. One such woman aptly puts it: "Either they are over-protective like knights in shining armour during operations or they are just against us." (Quoted in Singh; 2003; Pp.-16)

It is for sure, women's experience in RNA will be no better than above, in fact much worse, because RNA draws its strength from the most reactionary archaic patriarchal institution, the Monarchy.

## **CHALLENGES THAT LAY AHEAD OF WOMEN-COMBATANTS**

*"... Fight, fail, fight again, fail again, fight again ...  
till their victory.*

*That is the logic of the people,  
and they will never go against this logic. ..."*

*"Cast Away Illusions, Prepare for struggle"  
— Mao Tse-tung*

In any new practice and experiment, especially in the field of breaking age-old fossilised tradition, one is bound to face some initial hiccups and challenges. This is no less true in the field of fighting force where women in Nepal are participating in People's Army for the first time along with men. There are multiple problems, which they have to

overcome.

### **Patriarchal Outlook**

Feudal patriarchal outlook, first of all, does not treat women as individuals, secondly, it sees them in the light of their reproductive function. This outlook is bound to effect PLA too. This is reflected by men's tendency to underestimate women's capabilities. Even if they prove their prowess, men tend to see it as temporary phenomena, which will wear off after they get married and bear children. Hence, there is a strong tendency to see any inconvenience, temporary rest, or illness related to reproductive system as sign of physical weakness or to see marriage as solution to women's problem. There is also tendency amongst most men to see women's top positions in army as imposed by the Party, rather than as a result of their hard work. As a result, they are not that enthusiastic to establish women's authority in PLA, as they would have been with men. This also results in not involving women in framing new plans, policies; instead relegating them to traditional gender-specific works. Women thus have to work hard twice, even thrice, to establish their authority over PLA. Fortunately they are able to do so.

### **Problem Of Docility**

If men have problem of being too confident, women have problems taking initiative in their hands. It is generally found that even if they have necessary skills, they wait for men to take initiative. They are found diligent, obedient, sacrificing but when it comes to formulating new plans, handling new weapons, debating on political lines they are found shirking. They also allow themselves to be victims of circumstances, this is often seen in their unplanned motherhood status which hampers their continuity and chance of developing leadership quality in PLA. Even if they have rich experiences in field, when it comes to reporting, they have problem synthesising their work and as a result their work is marginalised. Due to feudal patriarchal oppression right from childhood they are more prone to suffer from inner conflict, resulting in reflective reactions such as fits, hysteria. Their narrow outlook is reflected more amongst themselves than when they are with men. This is manifested in jealousy amongst themselves, in doubting women's leadership and thereby taking men's leadership more seriously.

## **THE QUESTION OF CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP IN PLA**

Women in Nepal have indeed taken a big leap from kitchen to combat-arena. However, the question of continuity and development of leadership in this field is still challenging. This can generally be seen by the fact that in combat-activity, while men well above 40 years are fighting, one hardly finds women above 25 years fighting in the field. Since the progressive development of leadership in army is intimately linked with rigorous, continuous practice and focused attention, women's lack of continuity in this field due to marriage and reproductive functions is robbing them of leadership positions in PLA. This has also resulted in progressive decline in numbers as one moves from militia to section, or to platoon, to company, to battalion, to brigade, or to division level.

While limiting the minimum age of marriage to 20 (the official minimum age of marriage for women as stipulated by old state is 18) has given women longer space to concentrate on their newly acquired activity to a great extent, however by not stipulating minimum age for conceiving, it has often lead to early pregnancies leading to their discontinuity. There are many reasons behind these phenomena, which need to be addressed at philosophical, ideological, physical and practical level.

It is often found that it is the men who insist on early pregnancy. The rate of casualty and uncertainty of death seems to make them keen to leave behind their physical mark. Political maturity would have made them more conscious of leaving behind their ideological mark. Although women-combatants in general are not happy to be mother at such productive age, however it is generally found that they land up becoming a mother, at least a mother of one child. This is despite the fact that their lives as combatants are also uncertain and vulnerable. This implies that although there is no dearth of courage to sacrifice one's life for the sake of revolution, there is still hesitation to sacrifice motherhood or fatherhood for the sake of revolution.

From the practical point of view, the unavailability or the high rate of failure amongst the available family planning measures have also contributed to unplanned childbirth. On top of it the one-sided burden of childcare and absence of proper childcare facilities has also been contributing to this state. Luckily a childcare center has come up in Thawang, Rolpa and similar projects are on the pipeline in other western parts of Nepal.

## **Health Problem**

Health problem has been one of the general problems that men and

women combatants face in Nepal. However, there seems to be a greater awareness for women's health problems. Women are found to be more malnourished than men are when they join PLA. The rigorous lifestyle of combatants, together with irregular food supply makes them more vulnerable. This is especially seen during menstrual period, when additional nutrition is most required. On top of this, there is scant awareness of the importance of maintaining reproductive system in order.

There is a tendency to hide problems related to menstrual disturbances and white discharges. Timely intervention often consisting of simple surgery or medication, or preventive measures can prevent these problems. There have been cases where women combatants have deliberately hidden their problems (despite concerns showed by their male commanders and commissars) fearing their chance of missing big training camps or military operations. Often women themselves feel that their source of weakness is their womb; that it is the menstrual period that makes them weaker than men; that men are stronger because they are bigger, taller and more muscular. What needs to be understood is that the self-cleansing system of menstrual period and the biological protection that womb gives to women against any epidemic disease in its pursuance to save expectant fertilised eggs makes them biologically stronger than men. Similarly, while men may exhibit more strength in short duration, it is the women who can retain energy for longer period. There is general lack of knowledge about the anatomy, specificities of man and women's health in terms of their specific strengths and weakness. Similarly, there is tendency to blow out of proportion the problems related to menstruation, while at the same time under-reporting or minimising the problem of hydro-sill faced by men in combat activities. It would be appropriate to say that the concept of women as weaker sex is as much notional as the concept of accepting men as the stronger sex, whereas the reality is that they have their own specific areas of strengths as well as weaknesses. Therefore, they need to be more complimentary in their association than competitive.

Of all the three instruments of revolution, the PLA is one arena where there is a fast rate of transformation. The rate of change in tactics, mobility and flexibility makes it the centre of contradictions, possibilities and transformations. In fact, most of the contradictions related to gender-relation and women's development get quickly reflected in the PLA. Solving these contradictions in a long run will solve contradictions in

other fields too, hence there is a need for the Party to take the problems in PLA seriously.

## **POLITICAL LINE AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PLA**

*"Correctness or otherwise  
of the ideological and political line decides everything.  
If it is correct, everything is gained,  
but if it wrong, everything is lost."  
– Mao Tse-tung*

According to Comrade Mao Tse-tung: "War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions between all contending classes, nations." Hence, which class the armed forces stand for is vital for not only revolution but also for counter-revolution. In order to make revolution and to check counter-revolution it is very important to make the army politicised. However, correct political line itself is not enough to guarantee the success, it should be reflected in organisational structure too. This is all the more true in PLA, where the question of necessity outstands more prominently than the question of freedom, and hence military conservatism can easily seep in which is detrimental to the participation of women in PLA. At present, there are three tendencies seen in PLA: right capitulationist; dogmato-revisionist; and creative scientific application of MLM and Prachanda Path.

Rightist tendency in armed force is seen by taking women's participation as a secondary force. They use women force as tactical force when the situation demands, or whenever their specific skill, body language, traditional division of labour are needed. Thus, their approach is very pragmatist. This results in using women combatants as assistants in rear areas of war, such as intelligent workers, as couriers, as medical assistants etc rather than in main war front. Even when they are given chance in combat zones, any initial hiccups, hesitations, or small medical problems are quickly taken as a proof of their inability to participate in war fronts. Generally, they do not make conscious effort to check pregnancy and when it occurs they are looked upon as women-specific problems. This then becomes an excuse to transfer them to other civil departments of PLA, or to mass organisations of the Party.

Thus, by relying too much upon objective reality of women's problem, which in essence is the product of feudal patriarchy of Nepal, it fails to

put politics in command resulting in pragmatic solution to every problem that crops up amongst women in army. This ultimately results in negating women's strategic participation in People's army.

Since CPN (Maoist) is at present in war path, the rightist capitulationist tendency cannot dare to come out in open, hence it takes the mask of dogmato-revisionist tendency, whereby it appears left in appearance, but right in essence. It does this by advocating radical slogans, extreme positions, swearing by class and class alone etc. By swearing with what is literally written in classical books and by not relating to the specific situation of the country and its gender-relation they undermine women's specific problems and gender discriminations in combat zone. They tend to look at pregnancy and reproductive function of women combatants as an opportunity given to them to prove their metal, to prove themselves as the true vanguard of the revolution. Thus, it romanticises the practical difficulties women have to additionally bear. And when their expectations of women combatants don't match with the result, then they are gradually transferred into non-combat departments of the army or in other fields in the name of necessity. Thus, they too fall into the trap of negating women's strategic role in PLA. By relying too much on the subjective efforts at the cost of objective reality, they fail to transform their righteous ideology into physical force, thus inviting militarist outlook in PLA.

The creative application of MLM-Prachanda Path lies in seeing the problem and challenge of women's participation in PLA dialectically. The CPN(M) does this by addressing women's specific problems, gender-related problems under the overall framework of MLM ideology. They look at women's pregnancy, reproductive functions as not women-specific problem, but as a challenge for the whole revolution and hence for the Party. They try to solve these problems dialectically by controlling them, or spacing them, depending upon the nature of women's work, the positions they hold in their work, and on the nature of the place where they are stationed, and most significantly, they protect the freedom of women-combatants to bear child or not to. Similarly, it is also aware of the possibilities that PLA can bring to the society. The question of facing life and death at every moment with ideological mind makes PLA a very conscious, sharp flexible, but also a resolute force. Hence new ideas, new cultures can be easily accepted and practiced in PLA,

thereby removing feudal decadent values.

## CONCLUSION

*"The Aim of War is to eliminate War."*

– Mao Tse-tung

People's War is a defensive war. War as a rule brutalises human race. The concept of standing army, barricaded army for any healthy society, country or continent is in the long run harmful not only for the society, country or continent, but for the combatants themselves. But in an increasingly polarised and class-ridden world, war has become a necessity for the proletarians: first of all to fight against war-mongering imperialist countries and, secondly, to protect their hard won democracy against the imperialist sharks, who operate through internal reactionary stooges. This has become all the more necessary for the oppressed women who have been victims of both class and patriarchal violence. They understand the necessity for waging defensive war in order to end all wars, so as to save their productive and reproductive power, and most significantly to save the whole community from killing each other, from orphaning innocent children.

In war, it is said, it is the wisest tactic to attack an enemy on his weakest point. In bourgeois state, particularly in feudal state like in Nepal, women's question is the weakest link. The incorporation of women as combatants in quantity and in qualitative levels in PLA has at one end exposed many loopholes in the reactionary mindset, their army, their state functioning, at the other end, it has opened up many unexplored possibilities in women's liberation and gender relations and thus challenging sectarian feminists. Lastly, it has enriched PW-experiences.

Reactionary ideology which draws strength from patriarchy, private property and papal (of any kind of religion) can never encourage women's participation to the scale and quality that PW can. In absence of scientific ideology it relies on decadent patriarchal values to boost reactionary army's morale thus encouraging them to punish rebellious women by raping, torturing and killing them. Such crimes have exposed not only class-biasness of the state, but also its gender-biasness. In the long run, however it helps in forging stronger class alliance between men and women. It has helped in demystifying ruling army as a protector of the country by drawing them to class war and it has also unmasked their guardian image as saviours of nation's women's honour by exposing their heinous crimes against oppressed women.



PLA has also challenged the myopic view of sectarian feminists, who see women as just victims of war, not as agents of change. By being silent spectators to the mass rape, torture and killings of women by the state and by shouting from roof tops against individual men on domestic violence, it has exposed their sham “all men hater” image or “all women, all sisters” image. What sectarian feminists should observe is that such rape, torture and killing of women by the reactionary state has, in fact, helped to mitigate hair-splitting gender divide that they want to highlight. Instead, it forges closer alliance between men and women based on class-consciousness.

Women’s strategic participation in PLA has facilitated in militarising the masses. This has become very important, as in today’s unipolar world any challenge to the so-called stable government in any part of the world by any nationalist or revolutionary resistance groups, ultimately invites the wrath of the US-imperialist intervention. And everywhere they have intervened, they have made no distinction between rebellion forces and masses, killing them ruthlessly like in Afghanistan and Iraq. For PLA, women combatants are like barometer to check the temperature of sea of armed masses, so that fishes, i.e., PLA, as a whole can swim through it smoothly. Not only that, by involving largest oppressed, all permeating gender, PLA is not only checking the militarisation of itself, but is also helping in democratising the combatants collectively. This helps in withering away of the army that in turn creates physical environment for withering away of the state.

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# **Women's Position In The Party, People's Army And The New State**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nepal, a predominantly mountainous, rural and agriculture-based country with more than 70% of the population living below poverty line, presents a unique case in terms of analysis of gender-relations. The subsistence agricultural economy compels cash-hungry peasant families to send their men-folk to work seasonally to urban centres of Nepal, India and now Middle East and sometimes to other countries. As a result of this, the women left behind by these males in their native places have to work twice harder by engaging themselves in back-breaking subsistence economy with less physical infrastructure and by taking care of children and old parents. The feudal production relation, which blatantly robs their right to parental property, makes them virtually dependent on men, discriminating them at every step.

The initiation of People's War (PW) in 1996 was a turning point for women to rebel all out against monarchical patriarchal system. The result is their increasing participation in all instruments of revolution, viz. the Party, the people's army and the mass front/ united front. This has thrown many challenges and possibilities before the Party, the mass movement, the gender relation and the women themselves. This article is based on the findings of survey\* conducted by Women's Department of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (Maoist)] in 2002-2003.

## **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

All together nine sets of questions under the headings: personal background, organisational background, family background, personal interest and experiences, gender-related questions, mental and physical health-related problems, organisational problems, method of solving problems and miscellaneous questions, were asked. The questions were framed in such a manner as to find out women's strategic and practical problems to develop and establish women's leadership in all three instruments of revolution, namely the Party, the people's army and the

mass front/united front.

These questionnaires were distributed in all parts of Nepal around mid-2002 and were collected by mid-2003. They were sent to Seti-Mahakali, Bheri-Karnali and Rapti zones in Western region, Gandak and Bagmati zones in the middle region, Janakpur and Mechi-Kosi zones in Eastern region. Due to difficulties in communication, logistics and the time limit, only 574 reply-forms could be collected, out of which 79 forms arrived from Rapti, 95 from Gandak, 91 from Bagmati, 77 from Janakpur and 232 from Mechi-Kosi. However, forms from Seti-Mahakali and Bheri-Karnali could not reach within stipulated time. The questionnaires were directed towards those women who were working at the Area Committee (AC) level or above in the Party, at Section Commander/Vice-Commander (C/VC) level or above in the people's army and at District Committee (DC) level or above in the mass front/united front.

It should be noted that the analysis arrived here only gives trend, pattern of women's position in all the three fronts. The whole study has been analyzed at two levels; one at a national level, in order to get holistic picture, and another at a regional level, in order to get the specificity of the regional variations.

This is the first attempt of its kind analyzing women's position in class war while the war is going on; hence, it is bound to have many limitations.

## **PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

Under this heading, questions related to name, age, education, ethnicity/caste, marital status, children status and class position were asked in order to know their personal background.

Regarding the age pattern, those falling within 19-25 age group were found to represent 46.69%, which is the highest, while those belonging to 18 or below age group were found to represent 36.93 %, and 26-35 years age group were found to represent 12.20% (Table No. - 1). From this, one can deduce that young, productive, energetic women are involved in the PW. Regarding the education pattern, those with education level of 6-10 class were found to represent 47.56% while those in 11-12 class were found to represent 15.5%, followed by those with education level of 5 class or less at 14.81%. It was found that only 2.27% belonged to illiterate category. From this it can be inferred that majority of women are not only literate but have gone through middle school level education before joining this movement. These finding contrasts with the propaganda fed by the reactionary state that Maoist cadre are lumpen,

uneducated and an ignorant lot. Regarding the caste, ethnicity and regional identity, those representing oppressed nationality groups (Tibeto-Burman and Madhesi) were 49.65%, while those belonging to Brahmin/Chhetri/Newar represented 38.33%, and those belonging to Dalit caste represented 7.32%. From this, it can be inferred that this movement has been successful in attracting more than 50% of women belonging to oppressed nationality group and socially depressed Dalit caste. However, the presence of only 0.35% belonging to Madhesi nationality is not very encouraging, considering that they face the worst feudal and national oppression. Regarding marital status, unmarried women constituted 70.56% while married constituted only 26.48%. As regards to bearing children, 55.26% had children while 42.1% did not have children. Thus, it is evident that while unmarried women outnumbered married ones, when it came to having children those bearing children outnumbered those without children. Hence, there is a strong relation between getting married and bearing children. It is worth probing how they are able to cope up with bringing up children under war situation. When probing class background, those belonging to the basic classes (constituting poor peasant, semi-proletariat and proletariat class) constituted 53.32% while the middle strata (constituting rich peasant, middle peasant and petty bourgeois) constituted 42.66% and the rich classes (feudal and capitalist class) constituted 0.52% (Table No. - 1). Thus, majority of those who joined this movement have come from the basic classes, amongst whom poor peasants constitute the highest at 41.29%.

From the regional perspective, it was found that in age pattern, 64.56% of women belonging to Rapti region were under 19-25 age group. Similarly in the educational field, 61.65% belonging to Mechi-Kosi were found to have studied 6-11 class. The highest percentage of illiteracy (10.13%) was found in Rapti region. The highest percentage of Tibeto-Burman group (74.68%) was found in Rapti region. Similarly, the highest presence of married women (43.04%) and married women with children (52.94%) was also found in Rapti region. In class composition, Mechi-Kosi region had the highest percent of basic classes at 83.33% of the basic classes. From above it can be seen that Rapti region, the stronghold of PW, has the highest percentage of women of productive age, highest share of oppressed nationality women, highest ratio of married women, and married women with children. However, this region has highest ratio of illiterate women too. Mechi-Kosi region, the new expanding region, has the highest presence of middle level educated women, and those from the basic classes. Thus, this region has the potentiality to become a

stronghold of PW in the future.

## ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

Under this heading, organisational status, field of work, duration of present work, past political background and source of inspiration were asked in order to understand their organisational background.

Regarding women's status within the three instruments of revolution, the highest position occupied by women within the Party was found to be 1.18% at the Central Committee level (CC). Similarly, within the PLA it was 0.49% at Battalion level (BN), while within the mass front/united front it was 4.60% at the Central Committee level (Table No. - 2). This indicates how women are still lagging behind in reaching the top positions in all the three fields, particularly in People's army. When largest presence of women was considered, it was found to be within the Party, as 75.98% were found working at the Area Committee level (AC). Similarly within the people's army 65.02% were working as Section Commander/Vice-commander level (C/VC), and within the mass front / united front, 94.98% were found working at District Committee level (DC). The overwhelming presence of women at relatively higher position (i.e. DC) within the mass front indicates that mass front has been the entry point for women, as well as a traditional field to stay on. The lesser presence of women in relatively lower position in people's army (Section C/VC) indicates this field is yet a new field or it may also mean there is less continuity in this field. Regarding nature of work, it was found that 81.01% of women were found to be working as whole timer (WT), while only 7.32% worked as part timer (PT). Within WT, 81.37% women had joined this movement after the initiation of PW in 1996, while those who joined after the 1990 people's movement constituted only 1.39% and those who joined the movement before 1990 constituted only 0.17 % (Table No. - 2). From above, it can be deduced that while after 1990 democratic movement, the Party was able to recruit slightly more women than before 1990, when one-party system or *Panchayat system* prevailed, it was after the initiation of PW in 1996 that qualitative leap in the recruitment of women took place.

Regarding their past background, it was found that 53.66% of women had no record of past political background before joining this movement, while 18.99% had come from United Marxist Leninist (UML) (i.e. parliamentary left), while only 1.22% had a Nepali Congress background. It can thus be concluded that PW has been a powerful force to recruit the

raw or so far politically naive women. It has also been successful to draw away women from parliamentary parties, particularly those from the left.

Regarding the entry point into this movement, 55.22% of women indicated mass front, while 21.78% entered through the Party, and only 17.25% entered through the people's army. This finding is in line with the overall position of women in the mass front, Party and army thus conforming further that mass front continues to be the traditional field for entry while army remains one of the last entry points. This is quite understandable considering people's army is not only a new organisation amongst the three, but it is also an ideological/political army requiring its recruits to join the mass front or the Party before joining the army. When asked about their source of inspiration, 41.64% mentioned 'others', while 28% mentioned 'fathers' and 20.38% mentioned 'brothers'. Here it is worth probing further, what 'others' represents. It is also important to analyze why very few have mentioned women as the source of inspiration. This may be because the women who have joined the movement as WT represent the first generation of women. Perhaps in future, the coming generation will have more of women as source of inspiration.

From regional point of view, according to the detailed survey, within the Party, 3.64% of women from Mechi-Kosi were found to occupy the highest post, i.e. Regional Committee (RC) level, while within the army, 2.17% of women from Rapti were found in the highest post, i.e. BN level, and in the mass front/united front, 13.33% of women from Bagmati region were found in the highest level, i.e. CC level. Also 100% of WT workers belonged to Rapti and Gandak region. Gandak region has the highest of 97.9% of women joining the movement after PW started. Gandak has the highest of 64.21% of women mentioning the Front as the entry point when joining the movement. The Mechi-Kosi has the highest of 30.61% of women with a United Marxist-Leninist (UML) background before joining the movement. From above findings it can be inferred that Rapti and Gandak regions are the main center of producing WT workers. Women from Mechi-Kosi seem to show a co-relation between having presence in higher Party hierarchy and the left background before joining the movement.

## **FAMILY'S POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Under this section, family's political background, their participation in the movement, husband's organisational position and wife's workplace vis-à-vis husband, were asked in order to understand women's deeper

subjective and objective conditions.

It was found that 77.70% of women had a left family background while 7.14% mentioned a Congress background, and 6.10% indicated a non-political background (Table No. - 2). This shows that those with left family background induced more women to join this movement. Regarding the participation of family members in this movement, 54.45% affirmed their participation, while 40.07% answered 'no'. This indicates the growing spreading effect of PW within the cadre's family. Conversely, this may also indicate how family member's involvement in PW has stimulated women to join this movement. When asked the husband's status within the Party, people's army and mass front/united front, the highest post occupied in the Party was found to be 9.09% at the CC level. Similarly, in the field of people's army 8.33% were found to be at BN level, while in the field of mass front/united front 11.76% were found to occupy CC level. This shows PW has yet to break the traditional patriarchal hierarchy in all the three fronts, whereby husbands are generally found occupying higher posts than their wives do. Similarly it was found that 43.42% of married women were found to work in the same region where their husbands were operating, while 30.92% worked far away from the husband's work region. From this it can be inferred that the Party has been sensitive enough to have both husbands and wives working in the same region. As for those who are working in separate regions, this may be due to the specific nature of both husband's or/and wife's work, or because they may prefer to work in separate regions out of choice.

From regional point of view, majority of Gandak women (81.05%) have their family background as communist, while majority of Mechi-Kosi women (65.52%) have their family members working within the movement. (Here it is worth noting that 81.04% of Mechi-Kosi women have their family background as communist). Similarly 52.70% of wives belonging to Mechi-Kosi had their husbands working within the same region, while majority of women (50%) whose husbands are working elsewhere belonged to Rapti region. From this it can be surmised that Mechi-Kosi women and their families are more committed politically and ideologically. This may be because Mechi-Kosi had been the center of Jhapa movement (i.e. counterpart of Naxalite movement in India), still whose effect remains in that region. The higher ratio of husband-wife team working within the same region in Mechi-Kosi may indicate that the region is an expanding region where local cadres need to be concentrated in the same area to consolidate it further. This is in contrast

to Rolpa where husband and wife are found to work in more different regions, not only because they are more experienced but also such transfer is needed to export PW and consolidate new areas of expansion.

## **PERSONAL INTERESTS, EXPERIENCES AND ASPIRATIONS**

Under this, reasons for joining the movement, the most coveted choice of work, level of satisfaction towards current work, the most desired and undesired quality and the most favorite international leader etc were asked in order understand their aspirations, personal feelings and the depth of their knowledge.

When asked the main reason behind joining the movement, 64.98% mentioned 'rebellion against class oppression', while 16.20% mentioned 'rebellion against gender discrimination' and only 9.08% mentioned 'ideological commitment' (Table no. - 3). From this it can be inferred that the emotional factor in rebellion against oppression, particularly class oppression seems to determine their motive the most. However, it is also important to channelise this rebellious emotion into ideological commitment in order to get strategic and long-lasting results. Similarly 39.89 % of women were found to covet working in people's army while 33.62% in the Party and 24.04% in mass front. When asked to choose their most comfortable, or desired work, 31.02% of women chose organisational work, 29.79% military work and 23.52% chose ideological work. From this, it can be deduced that despite women's higher participation in mass front they would choose working in military field if given the chance. This may be true because this field offers a chance to vent out their anger against oppression fast, and this field deals with day-to-day practical work showing immediate results too. The rebellious nature and the pragmatist approach of women in general may have induced them to find highest satisfaction in this field.

When asked the level of satisfaction with their present work, 41.29% mentioned 'fully satisfied', 52.26% mentioned 'generally satisfied' while only 4.01 mentioned 'dissatisfied'. This indeed reflects their generally higher level of satisfaction in the class war. When asked what they liked most in this movement, 36.07% mentioned 'devotion and sacrifice', 29.09% mentioned 'commitment towards goal and ideology', while 21.95% mentioned 'equality between men and women'. Similarly, when asked what they disliked most in the movement, 30.32% mentioned 'confusion in ideological-political work', 22.82% mentioned 'individualist tendency' and 18.12% mentioned 'contradiction between theory and



practice'. From this, it can be inferred that women's preference to 'devotion and sacrifice' also indicates why they prefer to work in people's army, and also their dislike about 'uncertainty in ideological-political work' may reflect their fear of the complexity of the political and ideological work. Similarly, when asked to choose their favorite international woman leader, 35.19% were found to choose Jenny Marx, followed by 18.81% choosing Rosa Luxemburg, while 17.77% said 'do not know' (Table No. - 3). It is worth reflecting why amidst a vicious class war when women both married and unmarried are so actively involved in all fronts, a majority of them chose Jenny Marx. This is indeed surprising considering that the rest of the leaders mentioned had more independent political, ideological and organisational identity. Also it is worth noting that 17.77% said 'do not know'. This could indicate either majority of the women knew only the life history of Jenny Marx (that too through Marx) or if they knew about all of the others then majority of the women may still be clinging to the traditional image of an ideal woman as the husband's able assistant.

From regional point of view, a highest of 75.82% of women from Bagmati region mentioned 'rebellion against class oppression' as the motivating factor to join PW. When asked which field they coveted most, 54.74% of Gandak women chose 'people's army'. When it came to choosing most comfortable working area, again 44.21% of Gandak women chose 'military work'. When asked the level of satisfaction with their present work, 63.63% of Janakpur women mentioned 'quite satisfied'. When asked the most desirable quality within the movement, 42.10% of Gandak women mentioned 'devotion and sacrifice'. Similarly, when asked the most undesirable quality 41.05% of Gandak women mentioned 'selfish motive'. When asked the favorite international woman leader, 48.10% of Rapti women chose Jenny Marx. From above findings, it can be inferred that Gandak women have shown a coherent preference for working in people's army. It is worth probing why majority of women from Rapti, the main base area, chose 'Jenny Marx', and not others who represent more independent, political-ideological, organisational identity. This could be either because only Jenny's life history has been made available in this region or the women here are still conservative in their outlook.

## **GENDER QUESTION**

To check the level of gender sensitivity, questions related to gender

discrimination while on work, while being promoted, while giving responsibilities, were asked. Similarly, questions have been asked to find the effect of marriage on their revolutionary spirit and to know their attitude towards the form of marriage. To get into deeper issues, questions related to dominant attitude towards women, the level of sexual oppression in their work and presence of animosity between women, were asked.

When asked the level of gender discrimination present within the organisation, 74.56% of women mentioned 'normally present', while 20.91% mentioned 'not present at all', while 3.66% mentioned 'excessively present' (Table no. 4). Similarly, when asked in which field gender oppression is most felt, 26.13% mentioned 'not seen in any field', while 25.26% mentioned in the 'people's army', and 23.69% mentioned in the 'Party'. From above findings it is seen that gender discrimination is indeed present in large percentage. However, when it came to pinpointing the field of presence, more women answered 'not seen in any field'. Thus, there is some sort of ambivalence in pinpointing the exact nature of discrimination. This demands further investigation. Similarly, when asked if they felt discriminated while being promoted, 61.32% replied 'yes, some time or the other', while 27.87% mentioned 'never felt' and 5.75% replied 'often'. When asked whether they feel while giving the responsibilities, their abilities were being doubted, 57.66% mentioned 'sometime', while 25.43% mentioned 'never ever' and 13.08 % mentioned 'quite often'. From above findings, it can be inferred that generally they are discriminated while promoting and there is general lack of confidence while giving them responsibilities. This indication is serious which needs to be rectified continuously.

On the question asked if revolutionary spirit changed after they got married, 44.25% replied 'it is the same', while 35.89% mentioned 'it gets diminished' and 10.80% mentioned 'it gets increased' (Table No. - 4). Similarly, when asked to pinpoint the main problem married women faced, 36.06% mentioned 'care of children', while 23.52% mentioned 'husband's covert or overt pressure', and 14.29% mentioned 'problem related to reproductive health'. When asked the best choice of marriage system, 61.67% mentioned 'love marriage', while 14% mentioned 'arranged marriage by the Party', and 4.53% mentioned 'arranged marriage by parents'. It is interesting to note that majority of women find their marriage not affecting their revolutionary spirit. In fact 10.80% even mentioned it enhancing their revolutionary spirit. But those who felt it has diminished their spirit must be seriously probed. The main problem

faced by married women has been attributed to their reproductive activity seconded by husband's pressure. It is interesting to find that very few have attributed it to 'neglect by organisation', which means main problems are related to their own family makings. As regards the choice of marriage system, it is indeed encouraging that majority have opted for love marriage. However, presence of more than one-third option for arranged marriage by the Party indicates either the presence of remnants of traditional concept of marriage or there is technical difficulty in finding a partner due to war situation.

When asked which outlook dominated when judging women, 45.64% mentioned 'proletarian egalitarian outlook', while 32.58% mentioned 'feudal conservative outlook', and 15.68% mentioned 'bourgeois consumerist outlook' (Table No. - 4). This finding indicates an overall positive change in the outlook towards women that PW has brought about. However, presence of considerable amount of feudal conservative outlook in comparison to bourgeois consumerist outlook within the movement reflects objective reality of Nepal. When asked the level of sexual oppression present in the organisation, 48.61% mentioned 'normally present', while 42.68% mentioned 'not present at all', and 4.18% mentioned 'considerably present'. It is obvious that the majority of women have admitted general presence of sexual oppression. However, it is also important to note that almost the same but lesser percentage of women has denied such presence. Therefore, further thorough investigation is needed to know the exact nature and extent of sexual oppression present. When asked the level of animosity present among women, 78.22% mentioned 'normally present', while 10.28% mentioned 'not present at all', and 8.71% mentioned 'considerably present'. From this finding it can be concluded that there is considerable presence of animosity between women cadres. This is very harmful not only to fight against class oppression but also gender oppression, and hence this needs deeper investigation. When asked the main reason behind this animosity, 40.07% mentioned 'ideological deviation', while 22.82% mentioned 'jealousy and competitive feelings', and 20.56% mentioned 'traditional outlook of disparaging women by women'. Here the predominant reason assigned as 'ideological-political differences' between women does sound plausible. This is because real political-ideological differences do not breed coldness but healthy ideological-political struggle. However, other two reasons advanced match more with the reality, as such animosity comes from personal vendetta. Hence real reason behind this coldness needs to be deeply probed.

When analysing from regional point of view the level of gender discrimination present within the organisation, 78.48% of Rapti women mentioned 'generally present' and 8.86% of the same region mentioned 'considerably present'. It is a matter of concern that women from Rapti should fall in this category considering that this region is the most consolidated base area within Nepal and that women here are more matured and experienced. Hence, it is very important to probe deeply the root cause of this discrimination and the nature of it. Similarly, when asked in which field gender discrimination is most felt, it is interesting to find that almost all have given highest percentage within people's army: 25.32% in Rapti, 37.89% in Gandak, 23.08% in Bagmati, and 28.57% in Janakpur. This is quite natural considering people's army is an arena where all kinds of contradictions manifest faster than other field, and also there is room for a lot of such discrimination as the concept of army as a male's exclusive arena is still predominant. However, such concept should be removed through regular rectification campaign as it directly affects fighting capacity of women while creating masochism within male combatants. Similarly, when asked if they felt discriminated while being promoted, 66.31% of Gandak women mentioned 'some time or the other' and 8.42% of the same region mentioned 'often'. When asked the level of doubt shown while giving responsibilities to women, 57.89% of Gandak women mentioned 'some time or the other' and 18.95% of the same region mentioned 'quite often'. When asked the level of presence of sexual exploitation present within the organisation, 55.79% of Gandak women mentioned 'generally present' and 6.32% of the same region mentioned 'immensely present'. Similarly, when it came to pinpointing the nature and field of discrimination, here too Gandak women seem to be more specific in pointing out the source of discrimination. Similarly, majority of them have boldly pinpointed the presence of sexual exploitation within the organisation. From this, it can be concluded that women from Gandak are more gender sensitive. When asked if the level of revolutionary spirit had dampened after the marriage, 60.76% of Rapti women mentioned 'same as before', whereas 13.92% of the same region mentioned 'increases'. When asked the main problem married women faced, 50.63% of Rapti women mentioned 'care of children'. When asked the best form of marriage, 79.75% of Rapti women mentioned 'love marriage'. Similarly, when asked which outlook dominated on the question of judging women, 54.43% of Rapti women mentioned 'proletarian outlook'. Hence, women from Rapti are found to enjoy revolutionary married life more, without having to dampen their

revolutionary spirit. When asked the presence of animosity amongst women, 83.52% of Bagmati women mentioned 'generally present', while 8.79% of the same region mentioned 'immensely present'. It is important to probe why women from Bagmati have developed such animosity amongst themselves.

## **REGARDING PHYSICAL/MENTAL HEALTH**

The high participation of women in people's army makes a lot of demand on their physical/mental health. Hence, under this section, how women felt regarding their physical/mental strength, problem related to women specific health by both married and unmarried women and the sensitivity shown by men towards women's specific health problem, were asked.

About the question whether they felt weak in relation to men, 67.25% of women replied 'some time or the other', while 21.95% replied 'has never felt' and 8.88% replied 'quite often' (Table no. - 5). From this, it can be seen that more than three fourth of women have mentioned 'feeling weaker physically/mentally'. This is very alarming, as such problem if left unattended may affect their participation in PW in a long run. Also this will have long-term effect on their psychology. When asked how their experiences are related to women specific reproductive health problem, 62.02% replied 'sometime or other', while 15.50% mentioned 'never experienced', and 14.89% mentioned 'often felt'. Here too more than 75% have admitted experiencing specific health problem. Similarly, when asked to unmarried women to pinpoint the specific nature of the problem, 64.45% replied 'menstrual disturbances' while 21.97% mentioned 'scarcity of menstrual pads', and 7.65% mentioned 'malnutrition'. When asked the same question to married women, 44.08% replied 'menstrual disturbances', while 15.79% mentioned, 'scarcity of appropriate family planning material', and 12.5% mentioned 'malnutrition'. From above findings, it can be inferred that for both married and unmarried women, the 'problem of menstrual disturbances' seem to dominate while they also seem to be aware of problem related to malnutrition which leads to menstrual disturbances. For married women, problems related to scarcity of family planning devices seem to be an additional tension. When asked the level of sensitivity showed by men towards women specific health problem, 74.56% mentioned 'to some extent', while 12.37 % mentioned 'immense' and 5.75% mentioned 'not at all'. From this, it can be deduced that most men showed some form of sensitivity towards women's specific health problem. This is very

encouraging as this helps in decreasing antagonism between male and female and enthruses them to concentrate on larger strategic issues.

When analysing regionally, on the question if they had felt weaker than men physically or mentally, it was found 81.01% of Rapti women mentioned 'sometime or other', while 6.33% of the same region mentioned 'immensely felt'. When asked to both married and unmarried women how much women specific reproductive problem they faced, 73.63% of Bagmati women mentioned 'sometime or the other' while 10.99% of the same region mentioned 'often'. When asked to specify the cause of the problem to unmarried women, 70.97% of Bagmati women mentioned 'menstrual disturbance'. When the same question was asked to married women, 50% of Mechi-Kosi women mentioned 'menstrual disturbance'. When asked the level of sensitivity showed by men on women's specific health problem, 77.89% of Gandak women mentioned 'to some degree' and 14.74% of the same region mentioned 'immense'. It is a matter of deep concern that more women in Rolpa felt weaker than men physically and mentally. Here once again more Bagmati women, specifically married women have mentioned women specific reproductive problem. It is interesting to note that while Gandak women were found to be more sensitive to gender problem, Gandak men too were found to show more sensitivity towards women's specific problem.

## **ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEM**

Under this heading, questions related to specific problems faced by women in all the three instrument of revolution, viz. the Party, people's army and united front, were asked with the intention of finding how strategically aware they are about their problem.

When asked about the main problem faced by women in the Party, 64.11% replied 'problem of upgrading ideological-political level', while 17.77% mentioned 'problem of developing leadership', and 6.27% mentioned 'problem of not accepting women's leadership' (Table No.- 6). Since the Party is the main policy making body, women have correctly pointed out 'problem of upgrading ideological-political level' as the main problem within the Party. Similarly, when asked the same question in the field of people's army, 25.78 % replied 'general tendency to assume women as weak', while 19.16% replied 'women's own inferiority complex', and 18.12% replied 'tendency to doubt women's capability in offensive military operation'. From this, it can be concluded that the problem women face in people's army is mainly to do with male chauvinistic attitude. In fact women's own inferiority complex is also

the result of men's chauvinistic attitude to a large extent. When asked about the problem faced by women in united front, 46.69% replied 'low participation in state affairs', while 18.81% replied 'tendency to dismiss women's leadership', and 14.29% replied 'problem of politicisation and militarisation'. From this it can be concluded that the main problem women faced is low participation in state affair. This could be a result of less attention being paid to make them 'expert' besides 'red'.

Regionally, when asked what is the main problem faced by women within the Party, 69.83% of Mechi-Koshi women mentioned 'problem of upgrading ideological and political knowledge'. When the same question was asked in the field of people's army, 37.07% of Mechi-Koshi women mentioned 'problem of looking at women as weaker sex'. From both the above findings, women from Mechi-Kosi seem to be very aware of strategic problems faced in both the Party and the people's army. This could be because this region has a strong political history. When the same question was asked in the field of new state, 56.97% of Rapti women mentioned 'problem of low participation in the state affair'. This can be well understood considering that this region has high percentage of illiterate women.

## **MEASURES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS**

Under this section, strategic questions relating to measures needed to increase women's participation, developing their leadership quality and guaranteeing their continuity in all the three instruments of revolution, were asked, to understand how deeply they have grasped the subject.

When asked about measures to increase women's participation in the movement, 58.54% replied 'women should be accepted as basic force of revolution', while 15.85% replied 'women's special rights should be guaranteed', and 7.49% replied 'wives and family members of leaders should be politicised' (Table No. - 7). When asked about the main points to be focused in the development of women leadership, 63.94% replied 'provision of regular ideological and political class', while 8.54% replied 'special campaign must be launched to establish authority of women's leadership in party, army and united front', and 7.14% replied 'hesitations shown while giving military, non-military responsibilities should be ended'. Asked about the measures needed to guarantee women's continuity within the movement, 64.63% replied 'attention to be drawn to increase continuous ideological-political level', while 14.46% replied 'to be sensitive towards women specific problem', and 2.61% replied 'special consideration should be given while allotting their working field'.

Thus from the above pattern, it can be concluded that women are very conscious of specific strategic solutions to the problems arising in all the three instruments of revolution.

From regional point of view, when asked about measures to increase women's participation in the movement, 62.34% of Janakpur women mentioned 'women should be accepted as basic force of revolution'. When asked about measures to develop women leadership, 68.53% of Mechi-Kosi women mentioned 'regular provision of ideological-political schooling'. Similarly when asked about the measures to guarantee women's continuity within the movement, 74.72% of Mechi-Kosi women mentioned 'give attention to constantly upgrade ideological-political level'. Here it is once again worth noting that women from Mechi-Koshi appear to be more conscious about strategic questions.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

On questions specially addressed to family members of the martyrs regarding the kind of problems faced by them, 52 % mentioned 'problem regarding bringing up children', while 24 % mentioned 'financial problem', and 16% mentioned 'lack of guardianship by the Party'. From this it can be concluded that 'bringing up children' has been the most pertinent problem. Hence, adequate child support system has to be developed so that the family not only retains pride of husband's martyrdom but also is encouraged to be part of the movement. Although here only practical problems were offered in the questionnaire, mention of strategic problems would have made the answer more holistic in nature.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

From the above analysis it can be safely concluded that PW has been immensely successful in breaking women's bond with their home and family, the bastion of patriarchy and private property. It has successfully released the suppressed energy of the women of the most productive age. However, this energy needs to be transformed into long-term strategic qualities, such as being gender conscious besides being class conscious, being practical besides being theoretical, being critical besides being revolutionary, placing knowledge ahead of emotions and grasping correct dialectics between necessity and freedom. What is most promising is that they have given primacy to strategic issues in comparison to the immediate practical issues in most of the answers. This is particularly seen when they answer to the set of questions asked relating to organisational problems in all the three instruments of revolution and



the method of solving those problems. Hence, the challenge for the movement is to impart these strategic qualities in them and to create an environment to develop these qualities even after accomplishing revolution.

Certainly PW has instilled relatively egalitarian proletarian outlook on women and, as a result there is less anti-men feeling among them. In fact in this movement, men are found to be quite sensitive to women's problem. Surprisingly there is lot of animosity present amongst women themselves. This may be due to their low consciousness and narrow outlook, which needs to be broken by broadening their horizon.

Similarly, there is still a presence of general gender discrimination in the people's army, particularly in the form of assuming women as the weaker sex. Considering that people's army still carries traditional masochist attitude, vigorous rectification campaigns must be continuously implemented. Since people's army is an arena where all kinds of contradictions manifest faster than in other field, this also becomes a field where if correct solution is found it will have faster spreading effect in other areas too. Similarly, the presence of sexual exploitation, no matter in what scale or how covertly it may be expressed, must be seriously probed and systematically removed. This has strategic implication on not only women's participation in PW but also affects the internal democracy between men and women in the movement, which will have bigger repercussion on mass line of the movement. One must also remember that balance between feelings and reason, and freedom and necessity must be maintained. This can only be achieved through continuous input of ideological upgrading together with intensive rectification within the movement.

Regarding the effect of marriage on gender relation, it is indeed heartening to see a qualitative leap in the form of increasing number of husband-wife team working as full-time revolutionaries. However, the barrier of traditional labour-relation between them has yet to break. Thus, more conducive environment must be provided to wives to make them more independent. Similarly, the strong interrelation between getting married and bearing children early needs to be further explored to find out in what ways it affects their over all participation, development of leadership and their continuity in the movement.

When it comes to women's practical problem, the problem related to health, particularly in relation to reproductive health, came out sharply. This is very worrisome considering that women in large number are involved in combat activities. On top of this, scarcity of family planning

measures in remote areas make additional demand on the already malnourished health, making them abort unwanted pregnancies, or forcing them to become mothers when they are not mentally prepared for it. There is a crying need for women doctors and nurses for solving women's specific health problems. They also can play key role in propagating and providing permanent or temporary family planning measures to the couples.

From regional point of view, Rapti in the West, Gandak in the Central and Mechi-Kosi in the East, have shown distinct features. Women in Rapti have ample of 'red' quality but they need to develop more of 'expert' quality. Women in Gandak have shown ample of gender sensitivity, and perhaps they need to be more class conscious. Women in Mechi-Kosi have great potential for being both 'red' and 'expert'.

To sum up, the challenges for women engaged in the PW appear to lie in fighting against pragmatism within the Party, against male chauvinism within the people's army and under-representation within the new state. In totality, the PW has brought about a lot of positive changes in women's lives; however, it has also thrown up a lot of new challenges, theoretically and practically, in all the three instruments of revolution. It may be important to remember that complete emancipation of women has strategic importance for society; for, they being the last community to be emancipated are required to knock the door every time the revolution gets derailed after achieving every partial result.

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★ See the questionnaire in *Appendix – 1* and tables in *Appendix – 2*.

# **Ideological Synthesis And The Question Of Women's Liberation**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the past, the focus of any talk on the question of women's liberation would be more on the emotional aspect than the ideological one. It would be more on analysis than synthesis; on the form than the content; on women's issue as a separate gender issue than the question of state power; in short, more on reformist line than revolutionary line. Emotional appeals would be made shouting on top of the roof, while not going to the depth of the foundation to see how ideological development affects women's liberation process. But with the initiation of People's War (PW), this tendency is coming to an end and increasing input of ideological synthesis is being fused with women issues, enriching both class and gender issues.

It is worth remembering the historic Unity Congress of the then Communist Party of Nepal (Unity Centre) [CPN (Unity Centre)] in December 1991 [*now CPN (Maoist)*], when it adopted the line of Protracted People's War [PPW] with a strategy of encircling the city from the countryside with the aim of launching New Democratic Revolution. Serious preparations were made to develop three instruments of revolution: the revolutionary Party, the people's army and the united front. The ideological foundation behind this line is the historic adoption of Maoism as the developed stage of Marxism-Leninism, which enabled the Party to prepare seriously for the PW. For the first time, with this synthesis, women's liberation got the boost to break away from the reformist parliamentary illusions and to participate in all the three instruments of the revolution to strive for New Democratic state. Thereafter, the Third Expanded Meeting of the CC of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (Maoist)] held in March 1995, which adopted military line drawing strategy and tactics of armed struggle in Nepal, gave teeth to women's liberation by seeking their mandatory participation in the armed force right from its field operation. The launching of PW in February 1996, unleashed the fury of rural oppressed

masses hitherto neglected by the Communist parties. It particularly affected women who had been denied the role of professional cadre due to patriarchal values prevalent in Communist movement. Along with this ongoing process, the Second National Conference of CPN (Maoist) held in February 2001, needs special attention. It synthesised the experiences of five stormy years of PW and nomenclatured it as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachanda Path [MLM and PP]. For the first time, strategic importance of women in completing the revolution was mentioned and rapid development of revolutionary women's movement, their contribution in PW was acknowledged. It needs to be mentioned that in the same year, the First National Convention of the Revolutionary United Front was held, which founded the United Revolutionary People's Council (URPC). The *Common Minimum Policy* and *Programme of URPC* formulated code of practice on the rights of women and family in the new state. The passing of 'Development of Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' in the CC meeting in June 2003 emphasising on the importance of democratising the three instruments of revolution holds possibilities of exploring ways whereby revolutionary women can become agents for preventing counter-revolution. The historic Party rectification and unity document passed by CC in September-October 2005 also needs special mention as it contains seeds for enriching MLM and PP which can enrich women's liberation further.

## **PRACHANDA PATH AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

The distinctiveness of the People's War in Nepal lies in its speedy development. Together with this, the other specificity of the PW is the participation of oppressed groups especially the participation of oppressed women. This is actually the outcome of the scientific principle followed by CPN (Maoist) which has been using the principles of MLM very creatively while recognising the specificity of Nepal which it has nomenclatured as Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachanda Path. The hallmark of PP is that it is strategically firm and tactically flexible. It is not rooted in dogma, but is always daring to take up initiatives in all aspects of the revolution. Such flexibility and creativity when guided by revolutionary strategy can unleash force, so far locked up in the name of preserving archaic feudal patriarchal values that affect even revolutionary parties. This ideological synthesis together with its development holds various potentialities for women to draw out important lessons from the Party's analysis of international situation,

history of Nepal, mass-line, Stalin's question, democracy question, rectification question, leadership question.

## **INTERNATIONAL SITUATION AND WOMEN'S QUESTION**

The specificity of MLM and PP is that while waging PW in Nepal, it has never abandoned analysing the world situation, thereby expanding its horizon from Nepal to South Asian Federation (*passed in the Second National Conference in 2001*), to the concept of World Federation (*passed in the CC document in 2005*). This has particular significance to the regionally, nationally and sexually oppressed masses that the Party is trying to mobilise, as such expanding horizon helps in uplifting their narrow regional, national and gender outlook to a more universal proletarian outlook. Amongst all the oppressed masses, it is important to note that there is real objective basis for oppressed women in particular to carry narrow outlook as they have historically been left behind from active public life much longer than the rest of other oppressed masses. Hence, such a universal outlook is all the more needed in breaking their limited horizon and women leaders and cadres should learn to capitalise from such analysis.

## **ANALYSIS OF NEPALESE HISTORY AND WOMEN'S QUESTION**

The document passed by the Second National Conference has critically analyzed the history as interpreted by the reactionary forces that the King and monarchy are deep-rooted in the Nepalese society, thereby justifying their rule. Instead, the document highlights how before the emergence of centralised feudal state (in 1769 A.D.), tribal democratic system prevailed with self-rule. Thus, it refuted the monarchist tradition and instead asserted to capitalise on democratic and autonomy-oriented tradition based on concrete analysis of concrete situation. It also capitalised on the tribal militarism to prepare for the PW and to enhance it. The Party has also emphasised that unlike in more developed countries, the class-division in Nepal is not very sharp. This is because the proletarian class here is weak and the national bourgeoisie was not allowed to develop fully. Hence, class exploitation is seen more in the form of nationality, sexuality and regional disparity than in a direct form. Keeping this in mind, the CPN (Maoist) has adopted policy recognising that the oppressed groups form a very important part of the struggle. In fact based on this, the Party under its united front policy has developed

nine autonomous regional states based on different nationalities and oppressed regions, where women's participation has been made mandatory. The tribal system being more egalitarian, in some places even matriarchal, the Party is principally able to tap tribal women's active participation in the revolution. Secondly, it is also able to unleash the fury of Aryan women who have been living a dominated, insignificant vegetative life under the feudal patriarchal culture. Women are in fact more oppressed than the oppressed masses and poorer than the poor masses. Therefore, they form one of the basic masses on which the revolution must rely. Hence, it has been the policy of the Party to mobilise oppressed and poorer women in particular and other women in general. The increasing participation of women in the PW is the outcome of this policy.

## **MASS-LINE AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

The Second National Conference has emphasised the importance of mass-line as an important methodology. It has been further reinforced in the CC document passed in 2005. It should be noted that the weakest point of the reactionary state is its so-called "mass-line" which can never be put to practice because of its anti-mass ideology. Whereas for those waging class-war the mass-line is a lifeline not only for practicing their theory but also to survive under harsh repression unleashed by the reactionary state. Mao has rightly said on this question, "Have firm faith on the masses even in the most tryst period of difficulties and remain firmly with them". It is important to note that after taking correct scientific ideological position, it is the correct scientific mass-line that will finally make the practical application of scientific theory possible. Also, there is a strong co-relation between the correct mass-line practiced by the Party and participation of women in the movement. In short, where the Party, taking into consideration the local specificities, has consciously practiced mass-line, there has been a phenomenal increase in the participation of women in the movement. And their enthusiastic participation in the movement has enriched the mass-line of the Party. Practice has time and again proved that where there is greater participation of women, the Party is able to entrench itself firmly in the localities despite state repression. Where mass-line is neglected then bureaucratic, sectarian, mechanical and dogmatic tendency seeps in within the Party, thereby slowly stifling women's participation. In the Second National Conference document, it has been rightly stated:

"Upholding more firmly the Marxist science that women's participation is the measuring rod for the success of any great revolution in the history, it is another significant aspect of the Party's mass line to assist in elevating the process of this revolt to the consciousness of the proletariat. The basic policy in this regard of the Party would be to march forward by grasping the historical reality that the new democratic and socialist norms and values may be established only when patriarchal, feudal values, conceptions and norms, including bourgeoisie values on family, sex, marriage, personal property, are completely uprooted with participation of women in the revolution".

## **THE STALIN QUESTION AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

In the present ideological analysis, attention has been drawn on Mao's analysis of Stalin in the international communist movement, which calls for taking lesson from Stalin's 30% shortcomings while defending his 70% positive contributions. Stalin's monolithic outlook on the question of understanding the Party as not unity of opposites but as monolithic unity has been drawn to attention. Such outlook negates the correct two-line struggle within the Party, thereby neglecting dialectics. Such tendency increases bureaucratic sectarian, mechanical and dogmatic tendencies, emboldening the already prevalent servile tendency prevalent in women. Such tendency discourages independent-minded, bold, rebellious women and kills the spirit of right to rebel, the essence of Cultural Revolution. However, in the period of war one should also be careful against the rightist liquidation tendency that may come in the form of feminist post-modernism in the name of highlighting gender oppression at the cost of class oppression. It is to be noted that the highest practice of unity of opposites is to be found in the husband and wife relationship. Marriage of two individuals with different backgrounds itself proves that their union is the union of diversity. If union based on monolithic unity is forced upon the relationship, such action either may lead to divorce, may increase tension, or out of the two one may be forced to remain suppressed. Perhaps this may have some reflections on Stalin's strained relationship with his wife.

It is important to observe the increasing tendency of male and female cadres to get married voluntarily in the process of PW in Nepal. Such alliance if allowed to fruit to higher unity by taking care of their individual choice, interest, workplace within the framework of necessity will not only result in emboldening their commitment to the movement

but also prepare ground for developing further the leadership quality of married women. It should be observed that they often seem to lose even the little initiative that they had before they married after entering into marriage alliance. Such outlook encourages couples, particularly women to have their own political judgment and opinion when there is two-line struggle, encouraging them to become politically sharp. Being left behind in history for no fault of their own, they need to be given space to make mistakes and to learn from them. It is also important to correct the general tendency seen among women which, is to not to see unity in struggle and struggle in unity, thus unintentionally falling into the trap of monolithic unity thereby not tolerating even shades of differences when two-line struggle takes place. They also forget that one divides into two, thus refusing to see events, persons, leaders, organisations and developments dialectically, thus falling into subjective fixation. Rather than looking into the objective root cause of the split, the different tendencies emanating from such cause, they start blaming subjective factors and individual persons, thus mistaking political differences for personal differences. The rectification and unity document adopted in 2005 has pointed this out very sharply.

### **THE QUESTION OF CONTINUOUS DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS AND WOMEN'S QUESTION**

The CC document passed in June 2003 under the heading of "On the Experiences of History and Development of Democracy in the 21st Century" has lot of strategic relevance to women's complete liberation process. The question of continuous democratisation process needed in running the Party, the people's army and the state should be seen in the background of the continuous failure of socialist states after they came to power. It is seen that the Party, army and the state lost contact with the masses, lost flexibility, creativity and initiatives gradually after they came to power. Hence, correct revolutionary ideology by itself is not a guarantee to lead a revolution, particularly the continuous revolution. It needs to be backed by corresponding organisational mechanism in all the three instruments of revolution, so that masses can constantly supervise, control and intervene them. If such mechanism is not developed in time, it will eat up ideological development, thus preparing ground for counter-revolution. Externally this means allowing the Party to rectify itself by subjecting itself to competition with other anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in running the new state. Internally, this means



to prepare continuous leadership team by subjecting them to rotation in all the three instruments of revolution so that they do not start monopolising their power. This mechanism not only helps in expanding women's activity but also prepares ground for developing their leadership qualities. In the people's army, it means not being hooked on to barracks, special trainings and over-centralisation at the cost of loosing political consciousness, mass contact and the production work. It must be noted that decentralisation often gives space for women to learn new skills and to gradually assume leadership in the army. Decentralisation also helps the people's army to be in touch with the local masses. Hence, unless it is the immediate war-like situation, emphasis should be given to be with the masses and be under their control, supervision and intervention. They should be the torchbearer of revolution and should be engaged in militarising the masses. In the specificity of Nepal, the Party has been successful in capitalising the militant tribalism that is still prevalent in many parts of the country. Militarising the Party and the masses ultimately helps in militarising the other half of population that has been subjected to feudal domestic slavery, and this in turn helps in removing the shame, inferiority complex and sense of helplessness they had about their own body. Also direct involvement in class struggle has made them learn philosophy, dialectics of life and death, thus enhancing higher political consciousness.

On the question of state power, the document has rightly pointed out that continuous democratisation of the state, so that it prepares ground for withering of the state, is hundred times more difficult than capturing the state power. The new state must maintain correct balance between applying dictatorship over the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist elements and applying democracy on the masses so that continuous revolution can be facilitated. For this to happen, mass involvement in running the state affairs must be ensured so that it can be called back if it neglects mass duty. In Nepal's specificity, where class division is not so sharp, where instead, caste, nationality, gender and regional division seem to influence the production relation, the united front under the leadership of the Party has the daunting task of mobilising all sections of oppressed masses against the main feudal monarchy (the main cause behind these oppressions). Thus, the question of leading the front by taking into consideration all tendencies has important ramification in completing New Democratic Revolution in Nepal. The question of forming united alliance on various issues related to women, democracy and national interest among various women groups and those affiliated to various

Parties also becomes important for the women front of the CPN (Maoist). Thus, such scientific outlook ultimately helps in solving different contradictions that come in the way of a united struggle. Women, being oppressed within the various oppressed communities, when armed with revolutionary ideology can play leading role in solving various contradictions between various oppressed communities. Thus, high preference for involving women in various oppressed fronts such as nationality, Dalit and regional fronts has been sought by the Party. Similarly, their mandatory participation in united fronts has been sought so that their potentiality to tackle contradictions of the masses socially can be tapped. Also the specificity of united front policy in Nepal has been to launch political offense centrally on the old state while launching military offense and building new state in the countryside. Thus women's mass front has been calling nation-wide bandh against liquor consumption, price rise and state violence at the central and national level while at the local level it has been helping the new state to implement new laws related to women and family. Thus by actively being agents for the destruction of the old state and the construction of the new state, they are able to assert their power through state functioning, thereby further sharpening their class instinct.

## **QUESTION OF DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES IN WOMEN**

Leadership question is the key issue in any revolution. Ultimately the scientific line establishes leadership in the Party in the course of struggle against unscientific ones. Also, leadership question is the art, the art of handling different contradictions prevalent within the communist movement, including successfully mobilising the cadres. Ultimately it is the correct concrete analysis of concrete situation that makes the main leader the first leader amongst the group of leaders. In this respect Com. Prachanda, the first amongst the group of leaders of CPN (Maoist), has been sensitive to set higher priorities to women so as to give them opportunities in all instruments of revolution- the Party, the army and the united front. The conscious effort to develop communist leadership amongst the oppressed communities has been one of the hallmarks of PP; developing communist women leadership has been one of the most important priority, as they constitute the most oppressed amongst all oppressed sections of the society. It should be noted that the more the oppressed nationalities and regions get their rights to self determination under the leadership of the proletarian Party, the more the rights of

women earned through struggle will be well protected. Hence oppressed women should instinctively side with the oppressed community.

Given the fact that women's growth has been stunted since the emergence of private property, given that they alone will fight continuous war in order to do away with private property so as to achieve complete emancipation of women, given that true communism will only be achieved by completely abolishing private property, hence, the strategic importance of developing leadership qualities amongst women has been consciously sought, resulting in the formation of Women's Department under the direct supervision of the Central Committee. One of its main aims was to transform the quantitative increase of women's participation into qualitative leadership positions. Data forms addressed to women cadres of various levels within the Party, the army and the united front, asking them to pinpoint the areas of their interest, limitations, possibilities, were distributed by the Women's Department. Although such an exercise is first of its kind, and although very limited forms managed to arrive despite logistic difficulties and difficult terrain, it was found that most of them had very good potentiality to develop leadership qualities as they have pinpointed correct strategic steps needed to be established as leaders in all instruments of revolution. Hence the main challenge for the Party is to prepare revolutionary women leadership which can be agent for preventing counter-revolution

## **RECTIFICATION AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

One of the main concerns shown by the masses, particularly the women, is the fear of counter-revolution. So much gain achieved after hard sustained struggle has been whetted away after counter-revolution; women in particular look back with nostalgia at the gone days of tasting liberation. It is but natural for them to be very concerned to avoid such counter-revolution. As a result, they are most enthusiastic to carry out with great zeal any measures that come in the form of Party rectification to guard against the possibilities of counter-revolution. Take the example of giving up private properties, personal luxurious belongings. Women in Rolpa were the first ones to part away with their precious ornamentals, they readily gave the collected ornamentals to be converted into cash so that the Party can invest the money in nascent industries that are being gradually built. This they did before any higher leadership set such example, proving their greater attitude of sacrifice for the revolution. The strategic importance of waging continuous revolution is constantly

hammered into their consciousness, so that gains achieved through various stages of revolution are not reverted with counter-revolutions. They make sure that any slight gain in revolution prepares ground for higher revolutions so that more complete liberation can be achieved until state completely withers away. They are relatively more sincere, disciplined, less spend-thrift, less power hungry, more sociable, co-operative, have higher sense of commitment to their work, hard-working and have higher sacrifice feelings; all these qualities generally make them excellent agents, role models for rectification campaigns. Since the campaign to do away with the private property, applicable within the Party members first before applying in the field, has lot to do with preparing ground for the complete emancipation of women, they can become important ally for the revolutionary section within the Party.

## CONCLUSION

It is worth recollecting Lenin's famous saying, "Unite the workers and the oppressed masses of the world". Actually the essence of PP lies in the fact that it is able to catch the essence of Lenin's saying and apply it to Nepal's specificity which finds expression in mobilising various oppressed sections so as to run different nationality, regional autonomous united fronts, under which substantial participation of women is sought to run the new state. Women being not only oppressed among all the oppressed groups, but also the last group to be liberated are the most reliable, stable and basic force which needs to be tapped not only in winning the revolution but also waging continuous revolution. It is important to note that women's contribution in PW has not only been well recognised but their strategic importance in preventing counter-revolution has also been well-noted in Party documents and articles. Similarly, revolutionary women should undertake serious theoretical studies and sharpen analytical power to benefit from the periodic ideological syntheses that take place within the Party.

25 June 2006

# **Philosophy And The Question Of Women's Liberation**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The moment one hears the word 'philosophy' the majority section of humankind gets frightened. This is especially true for illiterate masses under which fall the categories of peasants, industrial workers and oppressed masses. Within them, the fate of women is even worse, the reason being that women are more oppressed, confined into darkness within narrow walls and they are poorer materially than the general illiterate men workers. Marx has rightly said that in a class society the philosophy so far has been the philosophy of the ruling propertied and exploiting class. He has thus presented dialectical materialist philosophy for the exploited and proletariat class, which has not only analysed the world, but has also laid foundation for changing the world. However, before understanding dialectical materialist philosophy, it is important to understand what philosophy is and how it is related to the liberation of women. This knowledge has become all the important for Nepalese women, who are engaged in life and death struggle against the feudal autocracy. Being involved in class struggle, it becomes easier to grasp philosophy.

## **WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?**

Man/Woman is a thinking animal. She/he needs reasons to live and die that are why s/he needs it to define or understand the world. In fact, for women, in particular they need it not only to justify their life and death but also to give birth to children. She needs it even more if she decides not to marry, to delay, or to sacrifice motherhood to achieve something higher in life.

Philosophy is basically world outlook. Hence as society changes so does the philosophy corresponding to it. The basic unit of society is made of man-woman relationship. That is why philosophy of each generation defines new relationship between man and woman. For example, in primitive communist society when the natural force was overwhelming and dominating human beings, the philosophy then was

based on worship of nature. Along with worshipping the power of fire, wind, water and animals, they worshipped the power of procreation of women resulting in matriarchal system where women dominated in men-women relationship. It was only in slave society that patriarchal system developed so that it could facilitate in bringing first division of labour between men and women as mental and manual workers. To justify the supremacy of mental work over labour and hence class division, the ruling class adopted idealist philosophy to justify the first class rule. With the coming of feudal system, man became feudal lord and woman became serf under feudal patriarchy justified under religious garb. It was only in capitalist stage that idealist philosophy was dominated by materialist philosophy based on science, based on profit-loss system. For the first time, women stepped out of houses so that they could freely avail themselves as free slaves in the market on the basis of wages according to demand and supply. Thus under this system, man became capitalist and woman became waged worker. Until this period, forms of class exploitation have been changing from crude form to a refined one without changing the essence of exploitation. For creating the basis for the end of all forms of exploitations, dialectical materialist philosophy had to be created to 'not only interpret the world but to change it' as Marx correctly put it. It is only under socialism that women become relatively equal under 'wages according to the work'. However under this system, the dichotomy between mental and manual labour still persists just as there still persist differences between urban and rural areas and industrial and agriculture sectors. Finally, under communist system even these differences wither away based on 'wants according to needs', thus ending all sorts of competition because of abundance of productions. At this stage, no separate women's organisation or for that matter any shade of feminism will be required because the basis for their exploitation no longer exists. Thus, dialectical materialist philosophy ultimately has answer to end all forms of exploitations including women's exploitation.

It is also important to note how the negation of negation process has enabled to reach higher form of relationship between man and woman. The higher status that woman got by virtue of her biological power of procreation in primitive communist system got negated by man's power over property in slave system in order to extract surplus value. Similarly, the crude subjugation woman faced under the slave system got negated by semi-slavery feudal system because through it relatively more voluntary labour could be extracted out of serf than from slave. The

serf condition got negated by free wage condition under capitalism by asundering all fetters to land thus making women as free wage earners. This gave the appearance of freedom to choose to work while not changing the essence of exploitation. Thus, socialism came to negate capitalist system to provide basis for social ownership of social production making women relatively equal. This prepares basis for communism, negating remaining remnants of inadequacies of socialism, making women truly free, free from all forms of patriarchal and class exploitations.

Thus, dialectical materialist philosophy is the most radical philosophy combining both dialectical and materialist outlook in order to end all forms of exploitation. However, it is important to note that two extreme deviations may come in the course of practicing this philosophy, they are: right opportunist line and left dogmatist line.

### **THE RIGHT OPPORTUNIST LINE AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

The right opportunist line (ROL) creeps into the movement when in the name of creativity, flexibility and tactical maneuver, one forgets overall, long term and strategic goal. This results in pragmatism, getting bogged down to parts and resulting into eclectic outlook. The ultimate result will be abandoning class struggle for reformist result. In the field of women's liberation struggle, ROL is manifested in the form of accepting post-modernist outlook whereby all struggle is centralised into gender issues at the cost of class issues. In the name of being critical against gender apathy within the Party, they forget to be revolutionary. In the organisational field, it seeks to make women's mass front an autonomous organisation emphasising legal struggle. In economic field, it seeks to limit its activities to equal wage struggle without questioning the exploitative wage system leading to economism. In cultural field, it seeks for freedom without taking necessity into consideration thus leading to cultural anarchism, resulting in alienation from the masses. In the field of united front, they make antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions hotchpotch, treating antagonistic contradiction as non-antagonistic, thus going soft towards arch reactionary class in the name of women solidarity.

### **THE DOGMATIC REVISIONIST LINE AND ITS EFFECT ON WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

The dogmatist revisionist line (DRL) results in the name of giving

primacy to classical theory, class struggle, long term strategy and thus it abandons tactical moves, flexibility and gets bogged down to dogmatism. In short, it does not see events in motion, in changes, resulting into fixations. In the name of becoming revolutionary, they forget to become critical thus alienating themselves from the masses. In the field of women's movement, DRL results in conservative outlook whereby in the name of upholding class outlook it stops tolerating gender issues within the movement. In organisational work, DRL results in minimising creative role of women's mass front thus making it formal appendix of the Party. In economic front, it results in abandoning women-specific economic issues in the name of addressing class issues thus alienating women masses. In cultural field, it throttles freedom, creativity in the name of giving primacy to necessity thus killing the spirit of liberation. In united front, DRL mixes up non-antagonistic contradiction with antagonistic contradiction thus making the scope of united front narrow. It becomes antagonistic to feminist organisations even when they are against feudalism and imperialism. DRL tends to see things in monolithic way. First of all, it discourages different shades of opinion within the Part structure, secondly, in ongoing two-line struggle when the husband happens to plead minority line it tends to assume that the wife too follows the same line without probing deeply. Often DRL falls into the trap of form in the name of looking revolutionary when in essence, it loses sight of the strategy. For instance, in the name of checking imperialist cultural degradation of women, revolutionary women's front tends to go about tearing tight pants and provocative dresses in semi-urban places while not putting effective effort to ban beauty pageants held in urban areas under the protection of state machinery. Thus, it loses sight of targeting the state machinery that is the cause behind such degradation. The end result of both ROL and DRL is seeing things in part, losing the holistic picture.

## **DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST LINE AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION**

Gender exploitation being the oldest of all forms of class exploitations, needs dialectical materialist outlook all the more. This outlook looks at any phenomena including all forms of patriarchy from historical perspective. It treats class and gender issues dialectically. While accepting class perspective as the fundamental issue, it will not hesitate to give importance to gender issues if and when situation demands. Using concrete analysis of concrete situation, it will use gender exploitation



as an entry point to mobilise women for class struggle in predominantly feudal society, and class exploitation as an entry point to mobilise women for higher man-woman relationship in predominantly tribal society.

This outlook also constantly evaluates what is principle and secondary contradiction in women's liberation movement and also what are general and specific problems of women. Based on this, it formulates various plans to be effectively implemented, avoiding both ROL and DRL. While accepting Party as the principle organisation and women's mass front as secondary, it will not hesitate to give due importance to mass organisation if the situation demands. In strategy, it becomes firm making sure that politics in command is applied in running the women's mass front, while in tactics, it permits flexibility allowing mass front to be creative and to grow. In economic field, it integrates women specific exploitation within class exploitation. Similarly in cultural field, it seeks to go beyond the world of necessity towards the world of freedom. Thus, today women may need women's mass front as necessity but they also want this mass front to wither away, just as state withers away, so that the burden of comparison between men and women are lifted for ever. In united front policy, it tries to rope in as many oppressed people as possible to bring them under anti-patriarchal, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist movement, leaving behind hard-core reactionaries. This applies also to those men and women who have rebelled against their own rich class and the gender oppression prevalent in it. In short, dialectical materialist outlook sees unity and struggle between women and men, and within women and men in such a way that in the name of solidarity between women, it also sees struggle between them in class terms; and in the name of struggle against patriarchy, it sees unity with men who hold proletarian outlook. Thus, they are neither pro-women nor anti-men unlike the radical feminists.

## CONCLUSION

Poor and oppressed women need dialectical materialist outlook all the more because their lives are more complex and full of contradictions. The more struggling the life is, the more is the need to know the knowledge of philosophy. In the context of Nepal where women are fighting class war, this is all the more needed. They need reason first of all, as to why they should live or die for their liberation, secondly, to avoid marriage, or delay marriage or postpone or sacrifice motherhood in this difficult circumstance of war, thirdly, to transfer their quantitative participation into qualitative participation in all the three instruments

of revolution- the Party, people's army and the new state, and lastly, to fight against two struggles simultaneously: class exploitation and gender exploitation.

Strategically, the knowledge of dialectical materialism is absolutely a must in waging two-line struggle within the Party. Women cadres often lose over men on this matter. As a result, the quality of two-line struggle within the Party gets affected. In Nepal where increasing number of women are joining CPN (Maoist), it is all the more important to impart this knowledge on them, otherwise if married they get swayed by their husband's line, and if unmarried they get swayed by the majority line without questioning. In both the cases, not only will their ideological growth get stunted but quality of the Party itself gets affected.

Similarly, for defending, applying and developing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, knowledge of dialectical materialism is vital not only for enriching class struggle but also gender struggle. Women should know that being offensive in battle field is not enough. What ultimately matters is ideological offensive in all the fields.

12 August 2001

# **Interview To People's March<sup>1</sup>**

***PM: We see women's participation in Nepal's People's War in a very big way. This is a significant achievement. How did the CPN (Maoist) achieve it?***

**Parvati:** First, we should notice that in Nepal, the left movement has been quite strong. Because of this factor, leftists, be it revisionists or be it revolutionaries, have been quite bold in bringing the women to streets. Now having said that, though we had women coming into the streets, they could not advance, mainly because revisionists did not want to go beyond legal struggle and the revolutionary party had not yet undertaken practical implementation of their revolutionary theory. So there was a big gap between theory and practice. As a result, what happened either was that the women in their young age were very active, but once they got married, they eventually became the wives of leaders or vanished into oblivion. Thus, marriage became a patriarchal left institution for producing good efficient wives for the male communist leaders at the cost of loosing women cadres in communist movement. But because the left movement was active, you would get fresh group of women repeatedly coming and vanishing. This vicious cycle got asunder with the initiation of People's War in the year 1996. It unleashed the fury of women so far locked in legal and trivial struggle.

Objectively you should also know that in Nepal, the main productive force constituting of males, migrate either to Indian cities or to urban areas within the country, leaving their wives behind to survive in a very isolated, rugged and very difficult terrain in rural Nepal with very little infrastructure. Nepal, in fact, has something like de-facto women-headed households. They are married but literally living on their alone most of the years taking care of children and old parents. Therefore, you can virtually say that women are running peasant's economy in Nepal. Nevertheless, the feudal patriarchy headed by the King not only denies her identity, but also robs away her labour by denying her right to parental property. And many times, what happens is that, due to absence of wives from husbands' lives for long period they are easily co-wived. However, given the fact that there is hardly any legal protection, if at all complaint is registered, no punishment or very light punishment is given eventually condoning the second marriage. So there is lot of anger ready to burst

out which the PW is able to tap. Even without organising them, they would just come, because the situation is so intolerable.

Subjectively, our Party has always been active in women front even before the launching of PW. We were, in fact, the first ones to stop the first beauty contest held in Kathmandu in 1990. Similarly, regular protests against rape and all kinds of pornography had been held in different parts of Nepal. And we had been regularly celebrating 8th. March with political statements. Especially during the *Panchayat* system, when all the political parties were banned, everybody would look forward to 8th March, where they could pour out their political statements. So there has been a culture of the women's movement. One very interesting thing I observed in Nepal is that we do not have male and female divide as much as in western countries, or may be even to some extent in India. In our 8th March demonstrations, you will find quite a number of men shouting slogans along with women. In fact, when we go and fight against beauty contest men accompany us.

The most radical rupture that the PW was able to bring in women's lives was that it broke women away from the family shackle. This has strong impact on women's lives resulting in unleashing their hidden talents and capabilities. The very act of rebellion against this oldest family institution has set in a chain of reactions. The first chain of reaction is seen in the new marriage system, which is based on love chemistry established in the field of action and the ideological alliance. The second reaction is seen in the way they saw their reproductive function. Earlier even among the communists no matter how many times they may raise their fists for women's liberation and shout against male chauvinism they would eventually go for male lineage, thus pushing their wives to bear particularly male children. Earlier they would have 3, 4, or more children till they were having their male child or even the most conscious women would have at least two children before the PW started. With the initiation of PW, this has changed drastically. The number has been reduced to one – now very rarely does one come across two. In addition, there is no question of waiting for a son now. So, in Nepal's context, it is a big leap indeed!

With base areas situated in our strong hold rural areas, we are able to practically implement equal rights over parental property. Similarly, we are able to give equal status to women. In fact, in many cases they are given first priority, thus we are able to practice what we preach. We have guaranteed special rights of representation in people's power. Now we have a number of women model villages, called *Mahila Namoonas*

villages, where women have right to their parental property, where they work in co-operative farms in their fields, collective fodder collection system, and where they execute construction activities, such as making rest houses for travelers, by investing their collective money on small productions. These model villages show our seriousness on women's cause.

The people's courts too have been instrumental in enhancing women's confidence in PW, where the general masses particularly those belonging to oppressed ethnic communities and dalits have been getting quick and fair judgments against their tormentors under the watchful eyes of the women's militia, which give protection to people's courts. Earlier not only women, but even men, had to travel far to fight a case in the court, which meant losing property to pay for the endless procedure of justice. Now the people's courts are right in front of their villages to give instant and proper judgments.

And another point of attraction is the working field of People's Liberation Army [PLA]. The people's militia and PLA have become points of attraction for women. Earlier, the entry point for women in the movement had been mostly the cultural front. Now the military front has become an attractive point of entry for women to join PW. The very act of joining the military field has tremendous transforming effect on women. All of a sudden from a totally unknown, submissive woman she has now become confident, independent fighter. She looks no less smart than urban educated women do. She is increasingly becoming political and philosophical. When most of the time you are dealing with life and death, it is bound to happen.

The protracted nature of PW allows women not only to change the society but also to change themselves. In a pre-capitalist country like Nepal, where absolute monarchy reins the state power, the journey to communism is bound to be a long one! The protracted nature of PW allows the revolutionaries, particularly the women revolutionaries, whose cultural level is lower than that of male revolutionaries, for a long period of transformation.

Our Party considers women as a basic revolutionary force (*the first to be oppressed and the last to be liberated*) who will not only work for revolution, but will also fight against counter-revolution, thus carrying the banner of continuous revolution. Thus, the policy of CPN (Maoist) has been to encourage women's participation in PW.

**PM:** *You were talking about one interesting point, about military and women. Even the bourgeoisie in the past and present day also never*

*allowed women to be part of the military. Communist movements are trying to bring women into the military, can you theorise on this? From the beginning the notion of women is – physically weak, muscularly. How do you visualise them being fighters?*

**Parvati:** If we want to fight against bourgeoisie, we should hit them at their weakest point. Their weakest point is women. Because they say that they want to give women freedom and equality, but in practice they are always deceiving women, or at the most giving these in form, not in essence. It's not that the bourgeoisie do not bring women into such military activities, but not in the same strategic way as we do. They do it as their last resort. And that too, as a symbolic act, reducing them to be decorative piece and using them as auxiliary or as reserve force, never taking them as strategic force. Thus, they are used in logistics works, as typists, nurses, intelligence operators etc. but rarely used as fighters in the field. I think, it is to do with their ideology, because the whole bourgeois system is sustained from women's oppression. They cannot afford to separate women from the kitchen for military operations for too long.

Take the case of Americans. They are deploying women, but they seldom send them in the battlefield. There have been one or two cases where women have been sent to the front. But such experience has resulted in diverting men's attention away from the real fight. While not fighting, women combatants are looked upon as sexual objects to be gratified and when in combat they are looked upon as weak delicate women to be protected from the harsh fighting life. This results in underestimating the strength of women combatants in both the situations. One such instance was called Private Jessica Lynch who was captured by Iraqi militia. There was a big propaganda exercise made by the USA in its attempt to rescue her as an act of heroism!

**PM:** *I think the bourgeois world also recruited women into the military because of the feminist movement or women's movement, in some services, that too in some gender stereotyped jobs.*

**Parvati:** Yes, most of the Scandinavian countries have done that, because there the women's movement is quite strong.

**PM:** *You were telling about the objective conditions and the inevitability of women joining PW. At the same time what are the conscious efforts from the Party's side? Like how did you apply mass line in bringing women into mass organisations and the Party?*

**Parvati:** One thing is that from the Party's side there has always been attempt to mobilise women whenever it was possible. In Nepal's context, we have various women related festivals, like *Teej*: it is the time when women come out and sing songs and dance. Although a religious occasion, this occasion has been used by women to weave their own songs of oppression related to domestic violence, male domination and oppression of women within the feudal culture. We took over this sentiment from them and we started using these platforms to politically educate them in attacking feudal practices. Everywhere in the villages and urban areas, these kinds of attempts were made. Secondly, cultural programmes have been encouraged because such programmes attract the attention of women in particular due to its perceptive appeal, which is then used as a means to gain access to their life and to teach them the key issues of poverty which is the cause of their misery and deprivations. In fact, women's front has been one of the most active fronts before PW started. It laid foundation for reaching to the masses. After the initiation of PW, there have been developments in two fronts. In base areas, we are consolidating the capacities of women to make them more economically and socially productive, by making them literate, involving them in small-scale handy-crafts such as shawl-making industry, dry food factories, co-operative farm works, paper-making industry etc. We are making them good leaders by involving them in running People's Council at different levels. We are involving them in People's Court. In white areas, we are sending them as organisers and as fighters to mobilise the masses and to protect the masses from the enemies.

The campaign against liquor has been time and again conducted. Similarly, campaign against bar women being used as sexual tools in urban areas have been continuing. Recently our woman front, the *All Nepalese Women's Organisation (Revolutionary)* called for a nationwide *bandh* (shut down) on the occasion of 8th March in 2004 against rape, torture and murder being perpetuated by the old state and against US-intervention in Nepal. This was the first time in Nepalese women's history that a nationwide call was being given by a woman's front. The *bandh* was a complete success.

**PM:** *In one of the issues of the Worker, there was a write-up on mass line campaign in Nepal. It is very interesting. Please elaborate about this campaign with regard to the women's movement.*

**Parvati:** There has been conscious effort by the Party to promote new culture in base areas and other strong hold areas. New festivals like

people's War initiation day, martyr's week, Mao's birthday are being celebrated with lots of gifts being exchanged. In these activities, women are found to be the most active as they run mess, restaurants, selling their products made in small-scale cottage run by the Party. All this gives mass character to such celebrations, thus preparing ground for more masses to be mobilised on new cultural values. Community based works such as *Parma* system of exchanging labour in plantation and harvesting seasons, which has been in practice for long have been boosted by spreading it in other fields such as collecting fodders, and fuels from forest. Much old cultural activity has been adopted with new inputs and with progressive values imparted. Take the case of *Mayur* (peacock) dance in Rukum, Rolpa, which was exclusively men's dance. Today even women are participating in it. There has also been campaign to militarise the masses. We are able to do this more efficiently, because we have strong women's militia present in our stronghold areas. In far western region, we have even cultural companies which perform cultural programs as they march along, thus giving cultural programmes a mass and military appearance. This campaign has become so popular that the old state is propagating their joining this campaign and other militia programme as abductions and kidnappings done by Maoists. We have also developed the concept of one member, one house; one village one organisation, thereby multiplying our memberships in mass fronts. Today most of our women fronts are not only self sufficient, but have more money with them because our women are not only actively engaged in productive works, but also are good at keeping records of the savings without wanton spending.

There has also been conscious effort to organise the families of police and army of the old state. Our women militia regularly visits them and help them in their hour of needs, such as catering to their fieldwork in peak agricultural season. They then slowly give them political classes to dissuade their husbands from joining the old force and to instead join the Maoist force. There has been conscious effort to mobilise children under *Bal Sangathan*, thus preparing ground for the continuation of the movement and mass mobilisation.

***PM: What are the problems manifested in women, because they are deprived of political and ideological education since ages. How are you trying to resolve this?***

**Parvati:** The most blatant manifestation of problems seen among women due to deprivation of political and ideological education is their silence



in the meetings. They seldom participate in political discussions. Women hesitate to take initiative. The question of initiative is related with them being deprived of their share of parental property. Males are expected to be leaders right from their childhood, so that they can protect their right to their lands. Because women are not associated with any property, the leadership quality is unsolicited from them. This problem of leadership and developing political and ideological level can be tackled at two levels: one, at organisational level and another at a practical level. Women should be given responsibility where policy related works are involved, together with facilities to develop their political and ideological capacity. At practical level, women should wage inner struggle in terms of marrying late, and even if married she should avoid having children or postpone having a child. They should be daring to take their own independent work, which may take them away from their husbands for long period. It is with this in mind that Women's Department has been created by the Party to develop women's leadership so that they can reach policy-making bodies in all the three fronts- the Party, the army and the front. At mass level, to provide equal parental property to women would create atmosphere for developing leadership quality right from the home, which can later be tapped by the Party to give political and ideological education.

At present, in military front, women's leadership quality is developing in rapid pace. Women are successfully proving their worth by showing that they too can live bravely and die bravely and that they too can command the fighting force. The main challenge for the Party is to infuse this leadership quality with politics and ideology.

**PM: Ideological and political deprivation is there among women. So how are you tackling that?**

**Parvati:** In order to test the ideological and political deprivation it is important to test their present level of understanding of their outlook in various fields. Our Women's Department had issued a set of questionnaire related with practical and strategic issues comprising of 9 headings<sup>2</sup> to women cadres operating at Party, army and front levels. The answers have now been received of which synthesis is on the process. One should also realise that ideological and political level of the cadres in general would depend upon how the Party's inner line struggle is being carried out. If it is being carried out with the correct orientation, it can lead to healthy development of ideological and political consciousness of the cadres, thereby leading women cadres too to develop in this field. It is

also important to impart regular classes on the latest political development in the national and international arena fusing it with MLM theory. This can also be tackled by bringing out regular magazines, bulletins, and weekly papers together with talk programmes on relevant subjects. All these have been taking place at various levels. The Party has been very conscious of the importance of bringing women to policy-making bodies. The recent incorporation of more women in Central Committee of CPN (Maoist) is a welcome step. Similarly, women have been incorporated at Politburo level too. Today in CPN (Maoist) there are nearly 10% of women comrades at both Central Committee and Politburo level. Now the ball is in women's court to prove their worth as ideological and political leaders!

**PM:** *In the article on leadership question in Nepal, you mentioned about class struggle, inner party struggle and inner struggle. We can understand about class struggle but it is interesting to know about the inner party struggle and inner struggle. Please elaborate on this?*

**Parvati:** Let us be very clear that inner party struggle is there in every healthy functioning Party. The point is how to identify such struggles in the field of women and gender relations within the Party. Let me tell you one example of how to understand the attitude of communists towards women in communist movement. One section considers their participation as having strategic importance and constituting of basic revolutionary class. They are willing to accept and guarantee special rights of women and hence strives to transform the structure of the Party, the women and gender relation based on this principle. There is another section that may agree with this in principle, but, in practice, sees women as a secondary force, thus relegating them as a mere practical necessity to mobilise the masses. For such people, any changes that they try to bring in organisational structure or women or gender relations will be only cosmetic, formal and skin-deep. For example, let us take the question of remarriage. In general, as a principle, everybody agrees with it. But when any specific issue comes, the differences crop up showing the differences in outlook. Take the example of the definition of family of martyr. We place high value on celebrating martyr's week programme in Nepal, where we invite families of martyrs to give speeches and to give them gifts. There was a debate, whether once martyr's family remarried (with the knowledge of the Party) if she/he had the right to represent as martyr's family on martyr's week programme. Those with conservative outlook had a tough time to accept them as martyr's family.

Similarly, there is tendency of taking women's leadership formally and to look at this as some thing imposed by the Party. In such cases, higher authority (specially males) will not take pain to help women to exercise their leadership in the organisation that they are leading. As a result, a woman has to struggle doubly to establish her leadership in her particular field – firstly, to gain recognition; secondly, to exercise her leadership. But those who take women's participation strategically, they have been found to be very empathic, and willing to wait for the development of leadership qualities in women.

**PM:** *What about the inner struggle that you are mentioning? Are you telling about the struggle with the self?*

**Parvati:** No, everybody has to undergo self-struggle as a routine, be it in revolutionary life or evolutionary life. Let me be specific about inner struggle, though I have mentioned it above. One thing we must understand is that the main tendency in most of the parties, which are undertaking PW in this difficult unipolar world, is generally the rightist tendency. Having said that, rightists cannot come in a bold way (as they can be easily exposed), so they take the form of dogmato-revisionist tendency. Let's take the question of reproduction in revolutionary life. The rightists will say I want to take a break from revolutionary life because I want to bear children. Such blatant statement would draw the attention of the cadres as being rightists and finding excuses for running away from the movement. So how does one hide this? By being dogmato-revisionist. Romanticising the bearing of children as yet another front, where women can prove their mettle in class struggle, is another dogmato-revisionist tendency. But in practice, all this revolutionary romanticism loses its heat when practical problems of bearing and bringing up children start hindering the combat life of the cadres amidst fierce class struggle. This eventually causes only the women to take back seat in the revolutionary movement. The revolutionary line in this aspect should be to discourage reproductive activities as yet another front where sacrifice is needed as much as one would sacrifice one's life for the sake of the people's movement. Yet, one cannot impose such sensitive emotional issues on couples. Only political consciousness and the development of PW can generate such self-voluntarism in this field. Hence, this issue should be dialectically handled; preventing, or delaying or bearing children, depending upon the level of political understanding of the couples (specially, woman cadre), their position in the organisation, the safety of the place where they are operating, etc.

*PM: In this society, patriarchal ideology so deeply penetrates that it operates also within women. So, because of this patriarchal ideology, starting from lack of initiative, lack of self-confidence, some petty feelings, etc. used to crop up. Though, I think, it is not correct to generalise, yet women easily accept male leadership, but at the same time, they have problems in accepting their female colleague's leadership.*

**Parvati:** Yes, it does have an effect on women in terms of under-estimating themselves and over-estimating men.

*PM: Those things I consider as inner struggle. I mean fighting patriarchal ideology within us.*

**Parvati:** Yes, women are often themselves victim of patriarchal ideology and that is deeply ingrained within them. I have seen women who get scared when one talks about women's oppression and label one as being a feminist. They often try to suppress the fight against women's oppression in the name of fighting against class oppression. It is another form of dogmato-revisionism, whereby one emphasises on class, physical work and being red at the cost of gender oppression, mental work and being expert without looking at the dialectical relationships between them.

*PM: Taking the class exploitation side is a heroic thing, but taking women's exploitation is, you know, compared to that an inferior thing.*

**Parvati:** I think one need not feel defensive when talking of women's oppression. This is because we are waging PW, and that takes care of the class struggle. In fact, in such a situation if we do not address women's oppression in the name of addressing class question then we may become left sectarian and isolated from rest of women's movement.

*PM: This point is very important. In the same class we are discussing, we are not going out of that class. If one is being branded as feminist that is wrong.*

**Parvati:** Yes, it is wrong to brand revolutionary women as feminist, if one raises issues related to patriarchal oppression within the PW movement. Such labeling may stand valid, if one is raising the banner of patriarchal oppression without primarily addressing the class oppression.

**PM:** *This also obstructs women's development.*

**Parvati:** Gender insensitivity becomes a hindrance when there is unhealthy inner-party struggle. In such a situation, it can have a very negative impact on women. Women begin to be used against each other, not based on ideology, but based on petty personal differences. Instead of discouraging low cultural values, that are generally prevalent amongst women, they are used to polarise the cadres and masses. Husbands will try to coerce their wives to align with their side, and wives may be lured with power to influence their husbands to switch sides. Marriage itself may become tool to perpetuate unhealthy inner-party struggles, whereby women are lured to marry comrades based on not ideological unity, but based on increasing the strength or attaining power.

**PM:** *Just to co-opt, forcefully co-opt.*

**Parvati:** Yes.

**PM:** *What is the reaction of the state? Targeting movement physically, militarily to dissuade women from joining the protracted people's war.*

**Parvati:** It has become very difficult for the old state to check the movement politically, so they are resorting to brutal means. They are arresting women, raping them, killing them. The Royal Nepal Army [RNA] cannot tolerate to see young women fighting and rebelling. In fact, they feel loss of their masculinity when they see women taking arms, because they have this deep notion that arms are for men to handle and it is the men who are supposed to protect the women. So, in the beginning, they were raping women to prove impotency of male Maoist fighters. But in the field, when they found that women indeed fought bravely, they started taking them seriously; as a result, they are being killed (and additionally raped) in combat at the same rate as male fighters.

RNA is highly sexist in its outlook. This can be reflected in the way it uses rape as a means to expose Maoist movement by forcing surrendered women-Maoist to say that they have been raped and used as sexual instruments by the Maoist men. Such condition was never imposed on male-Maoists when they surrendered. So, this way they are using rape as an instrument to scare away women from Maoist movement.

**PM:** *How are you taking the question of NGOs? NGOs have a very big influence on the society. How you are tackling the question of NGOs in Nepal?*

**Parvati:** Earlier we had problem with NGOs, but now we don't have much problem with them. With militarised masses and the instant judgments given by people's courts, masses are no longer influenced by the evolutionary, reform methodology used by the NGOs. On top of it, the brutal repression unleashed by the old state machinery leaves them no space for their method of functioning. Their class alliance approach to any problem becomes immediately exposed before Maoists, who use class approach to solve problem on the spot.

**PM:** *What about the problems in the social sphere like liquor or trafficking of women into India and all those things? How you are tackling them?*

**Parvati:** In our country we have a particular community called the *Badi* community. They are basically dalits, and within dalits too they are the most oppressed community. They were traditionally entertainers for the feudal lords. Now with feudalism eroding, they have switched into prostitution. Many of them are now joining the PW. Similarly, there is Tamang community in Kavre district near Kathmandu valley, which has been historically providing prostitution for the Ranas in the older days and are now providing for the Indian market at present. But the spread of PW and creation of *Tamang Mukti Morcha* [Tamang Liberation Front] has created awareness among them about the ill effects of their profession. Now the same community is providing good fighters for the PW. From these examples, I am intending to explain that those who are in this profession know very well what is good for them and what is bad for them, yet they are forced to take this profession out of compulsion. The PW has given them the powerful alternative to live for the humanity. Rather than killing themselves every night, they have now the opportunity to show that they too can be socially useful, responsible and live a dignified life and have dignified death. Earlier, before the initiation of PW, we used to solve this problem in a piecemeal manner, but it was not so effective. Today we are also able to identify and punish the traffickers much faster than the old state. Regarding tackling liquor problem, once we had organised movements against liquor consumption at the national level, which forced the then government to meet some of our demands. Since then such activities have been taking place at the local level. We have not banned liquor, but have adopted controlling measures, such as punishing those who sell liquor, punishing those who drink in public place, or punishing those who disrupt peace in their drunken state.

**PM:** *To solve the problems and gender based discrimination, what*

***are the organisational efforts, like you have this Women's Department in the Party. What is the organisational structure of the Women's Department and how does it function?***

**Parvati:** We have women's work at two levels. At the mass level, we have women's front known by *All Nepalese Women's Organisation (Revolutionary)* which has its presence throughout the country at various levels. At the other end we have Women's Department directly under the Central Committee of the Party and it is basically a policy making body to develop leadership qualities of women in all the three fronts: the Party, military and the united fronts. So this department is basically a think-tank, it does not have an organisational structure with hierarchical subdivisions that function like other fronts. However, Women's Departments have been created in PLA and in students' front, according to the necessity felt by the Party. One may say, if Women's Department represents theory, then the women's front represents practice. It acts as a bridge between the front and the Party. As mentioned earlier, the Women's Department had issued a set of questionnaires relating to their strategic and practical problems, so that a policy paper can be made on the basis of this exercise. Similarly, it is preparing a study course for women and is bringing out collection of articles written by senior comrades on women. The Department has been engaged in giving classes to women working on all three fronts at various levels.

***PM: What is the specific syllabus for women? Like for general cadre, general masses we are having general political, economical philosophy like that. What, I think, is for those who are working in women's organisation they need to know about the origins of patriarchy, private property, land all those things. So, that will be a specific syllabus. Otherwise, what is the specific syllabus for general women, women working in all fronts?***

**Parvati:** We have a schooling department, which is preparing syllabus for general course such as philosophy, scientific socialism and political economy. Besides this, separate syllabus is being prepared for women and oppressed nationality. Our efforts have always been to relate women's issues with the political lines that are adopted. For example, take the case of developing democracy in the 21st century, which has been adopted by our Central Committee, we have to see how this question is linked with the question of status of women.

***PM: Collecting material regarding women's question?***

**parvati:** Yes, we have already translated the material provided to us by your Party. And we have also translated material received from Peru. And we are still looking out for more materials to be translated.

**PM:** *What is the role in cultural organisation, formally and informally. And how are you raising the consciousness at the cultural level?*

**parvati:** I told you, we have tried to demarcate certain villages as women's model village where we are introducing new cultural values, such as raising children collectively, collecting fodder collectively. We are also creating new culture of celebrating martyrs week, initiation day of PW, and birthday of Mao as socially and politically eventful days. We have broken barriers of cast, religion, and ethnicity in marriage, today Brahmin cadre is marrying dalit, and similarly people from the Himalayas are marrying people of Terai region. Today re-marriage is not a taboo. Similarly, the concept of impurity attached to menstruation has withered, instead, it is being looked upon sympathetically. With the functioning of local FM-radios, creativity of local cadres and masses are being aired in terms of propagating new songs, poems, or stories, new developments in agriculture or breeding etc.

**PM:** *What do you feel about the present condition of the International Communist Movement [ICM] and the women's liberation?*

**Parvati:** I think the present condition of International Communist Movement (ICM) is good, especially those movements that are coming together on the basis of sound political ideology. And wherever the PW is flourishing, backed by matured ICM, women's issues have been given due importance. I think, Nepal is one of the best examples. Similarly, experiences of women in countries which are waging PW are enriching the ICM. So, it has benefited both.

<sup>1</sup> This interview was published in *People's March*, issue no. - 10; vol. - 5; October 2004. It is a revolutionary mass-periodical.

<sup>2</sup> Please see *Appendix – 1* and *Appendix – 2*.



# **Multidimensional Exploitation And The Question Of Women's Liberation**

Whenever the question of women's exploitation is raised, people generally speak of domestic violence, sexual exploitation only. Even during class, caste, nationality and regional struggle when women of oppressed class, caste, nationality and region become victims of rape and violence the focus tends to be only on the domestic violence and sexual exploitation of women. Many people are not able to understand how sexual exploitation is inexplicably linked with class, caste, nationality and regional exploitations. They are also not able to understand how these multidimensional exploitations are linked with the present exploitative state power. This article tries to throw light on multidimensional exploitation of women and how People's War (PW) has tried to solve this question.

Women actually fall under the category of most oppressed within an already oppressed class, nationality, caste and regional group. This is because men of oppressed class, nationality, caste and region oppress them in addition. Even in numerical terms, they come under the most oppressed group. Today, because of monopoly capitalism, on the one hand, the rift between the rich and the poor is increasing and on the other hand, within these poor classes, women are becoming poorer. This type of phenomenon has been coined as 'Feminisation of Poverty'. This means women are focal point of exploitation throughout the world. In Nepal this is manifested by largescale trafficknig of women in urban cities of India. In rural Nepal, this is manifested by emaciated state of women burdened by early, multiple births with overload of animal and family rearing job. In urban Nepal, they are exploited by sweatshops and sexual entertainment work. Those who belong to poor, oppressed nationality, dalit and marginalised regions get the worst treatment. Similarly in the oppressed class, caste, nationality and regional liberation movements, they have to bear extra torture at the hands of the ruling class. Firstly, they are tortured for protesting against the prevailing/

customary class, caste, nationality and regional authority and secondly, they are given extra punishments in the form of rapes for challenging the existing gender structure within the family. This is most distinctly seen when Dalit women join any mass movement, all the more if they join Maoist People's War. They are tortured, gang raped and killed. In Aryan dominated regions women belonging to oppressed nationality are treated likewise. This is not new, this phenomena is seen time and again at world scale. The incidents of mass rape of Muslim women under the hands of Serbian army in Bosnian civil war in post-Soviet era is one such example. This way, raping seems to be intended at destroying the reproductive powers of women- so that they do not give birth to rebellious force bearing oppressed class, caste, nationality and region identity. But as it is said – where there is repression there is rebellion and where there is rebellion there will be explosion. So today's conscious women are coming out in greater strength and numbers to participate in this class, caste, nationality and regional movement in Nepal. In the Nepalese Maoist movement that is trying to fuse these oppressions with class struggle, this is manifested even more sharply. Majority of women tortured, maimed, raped, disappeared, incarcerated and killed belong to these oppressed groups. And these are the oppressed women, who are fighting at front row in the battlefield, defying death.

Because women have to deal with sexual exploitation besides all forms of exploitations right from small age, they are more capable of recognising immediately the multidimensional forms of exploitation. This is more so amongst women belonging to oppressed nationality, caste and regional communities, who have to bear more brunt than women belonging to high caste and urban region. This applies particularly to poorer section of these oppressed communities. Thus, these women are one step ahead in fight against all forms of exploitations than women belonging to oppressor communities. In order to unleash their fury, CPN (Maoist) has given due importance to nationality, regional issues fusing it with gender issue.

In order to address national and regional oppressions in Nepal the CPN (Maoist) has divided the whole country into nine national and regional autonomous regions, they are: Seti-Mahakali autonomous region, Bheri-Karnali autonomous region, Tharuwan autonomous region, Magarat autonomous region, Tamuwan autonomous region, Tamang autonomous region, Newar autonomous region, Madhesi autonomous region and Kirat autonomous region starting from west to east of Nepal. Of these, the first two fall under regional autonomous regions the rest fall under

national autonomous regions. In these regions special rights of representation to women have been given. Also it is worth noting that if there are other nationalities in the autonomous region of a particular nationality, then representatives of those nationalities will be given political space in that region on proportional basis. All the oppressed nations/nationalities are given the freedom to promote their languages, to preserve or reform their traditional values and systems. For example, *Chhao Pratha* system in Seti-Mahakali region, in which menstruating women were made untouchable and expected to sleep in cowshed have been banned by the new state, while *Deuda* dance, traditional group dance in the same region has been preserved and enthused with revolutionary songs and dance. In Bheri-Karnali region, polyandry is being discouraged in Dolpa district in Himalayan region. In southern region fasting in *Teej*, celebrated by Hindu women for long lasting life of husband or to obtain handsome rich husbands, have started transforming into feasting occasion to strengthen themselves against rape, torture and indiscriminate killings by the reactionary police force. In Magarat autonomous region, marriage by kidnapping, group hoodlum fights under the influence of liquor consumption in traditional local weekly market have given to love monogamous marriage and competitive sports program in such weekly markets. Similarly religion based on nature worship amongst Magars has been preserved. In Tamang autonomous region the practice of selling Tamang women for trafficking has been banned. In Madhesi autonomous region dowry system, child marriage, domestic violence are being discouraged; love marriage is being encouraged and protected. Similarly in all regions, re-marriage of widow is being encouraged. They are also gradually doing away with widowhood, menstruation restrictions and witchcraft practices in Aryan race. They are also slowly doing away with anarchic multiple marriages without divorce procedures practiced mostly by Mongoloid race and replaced with monogamous marriages or remarriages with divorce.

Domestic violence that used to be rampant before PW started has been brought under control to great extent. Many anti-liquor campaigns conducted by women's mass front and punishment by people's court in case of violation of code of conduct has helped women to gain peace and confidence at home. This has not only saved their money, but also valuable grain that go for making local liquor. Similarly, local ruffians who have been exploiting women sexually have been punished or reformed or forced to flee, making village safe for women. Here it is important to note that open jails or labour camps have helped in reforming

many of such hooligans. Similarly domestic violence, state sponsored violence has been transformed into military strike against the old state. All these transformations have helped PW to be mass-based and have helped it in spreading fast.

The old feudal state that is now limited to Kathamandu and district headquarters, is panicked by the fast transformations taking place in new state. Sensing oppressed women's potential for rebellion against any form of exploitation, feudal and the imperialist forces have been trying to keep them divided by giving them false sense of identity through formal autonomous bodies built under their leadership and periodically throwing some crumbs of bread to them in the name of representation. Post-modernist outlook has been deliberately fed to elite and educated sections of these oppressed communities so that these oppressions are fought under autonomous sectarian banners. They make sure that these movements are not integrated with class movement so that the poorer section of their communities does not join communist movement. Hence in Nepal there have been attempt to open organisations based on caste, region and nationality, and to make them vehicle of preservation of feudal culture and backwardness of tribal culture. All these exercises ultimately undermine women's identity because in all these movements they try to curve women's freedom in the name of preserving their culture, identities. Ultimately, such movements take religious colour because religion is the oldest source of identity for all these various communities. And religious movement sponsored by the state is always detrimental to the progress of human beings, especially for women's liberation movement.

It is however interesting to note that the old state is being forced to change some blatant unequal laws such as abolishing anti-abortion law, giving maternity leave for both mother and father, banning 'Chhao Pratha' etc. All these are results of pressure put by urban women on the strength of what has been achieved in PW areas. Slowly NGOs and INGOs are also beginning to come with radical programmes related with women to counter influence of women in PW.

Lastly, while progressive transformations brought amongst oppressed communities is a welcome step, it is also important to be not too zealous while implementing transformations at the cost of alienating the masses. *Dailekh incident* (2005) where masses, particularly women revolted against the new state because of force used to bring quick result of transformation, needs to be remembered time and again to avoid such incident again. It is important to win the minds and hearts of women, particularly poor oppressed women through ideological persuasion rather

than through bureaucratic methods. For this, women in PW should know the history of their culture, nature of their oppression and carefully select what is to be phased out in due course of time, what is to be preserved and what new element is to be injected within their culture. The ultimate aim of such transformation is to bring unity in diversity, while upholding international proletarian spirit.

18 May 2006

# **Rape: An Instrument Of State Repression In Nepal**

The Royal Nepalese Army [RNA], the last instrument of state, is being mobilised to suppress the Maoist movement in Nepal. Suppression and repression are not at all new phenomena in Nepal, especially after 1996, when CPN (Maoist) declared People's War in Nepal. Before promulgation of emergency, police force and Special Task Forces (STF) were used against the masses. However, after the promulgation of emergency (first in the year 2001), military rule has been imposed in addition to mobilisation of above forces. Correspondingly, the level of repression has increased many folds. What effect all these have on women is worth noting, as they constitute the largest marginalised group who are fighting against this feudal patriarchal state in various capacities.

Universally rape has been used by various states as an instrument of repression directed against rebellious women; however, there is cultural dimension to its use and effect in various countries, especially in feudal countries. In Iran during Khomeini era, revolutionary women were raped before they were killed because according to their religious belief, virgin women if killed go to heaven. Hence, to make sure that they went to hell, they were subjected to rape before being killed. In Nepal, where the state religion is Hindu, where virginity is worshipped in the form of *Kumari Puja* (worshipping of the living virgin Goddess of Nepal), virginity is valued as a symbol of purity, prestige and pride for unmarried Hindu women and thereby enhancing prestige of her family and community. Thus, the use of rape as an instrument of repression in Nepal is to stamp women as culturally and morally impure, frivolous, unfit for marriage, and to bring shame to the whole family or community.

In Nepal, there is a growing shift in pattern of brutality on women. Just few months before PW was initiated, there was massive police operation in the name of 'Operation Romeo' (1995) in Rolpa, the heartland of CPN (Maoist), where six women were molested and tortured for being sympathetic to Maoists. In the beginning when PW had been initiated, women-cadres and sympathisers were generally teased,

molested or at most raped and then left to flee or were imprisoned. But as the tempo of PW heightened, with the increased militarisation of state, women started to be targeted more in the form of group raping but not killing them yet *en masse*. To frighten the masses, women suspected to be Maoist or sympathisers of Maoist have been marched naked in front of the public, taken photographs in naked state. They have been subjected to repeated rape with all forms of sadistic torture on private parts while in custody. To humiliate both men and women Maoist cadres and sympathisers, they have been subjected to exposing themselves naked before each other and forcing to lie on top of each other. There have been cases of rape committed on whole family whenever armed forces go to the villages for search operations. One such case is that of a family in Marinkhola of Sindhuli, where a sixty-five years old grandmother, a thirty-five years old wife and seventeen years old daughter were raped at the same time. In Dolkha district, Devi Khadka, a Maoist cadre who was going to attend students' meeting was brutally raped in the police custody in April 1998 by a group of police force. She dared to bare out all that had happened to her, naming the police officers like Madhav Thapa (DSP), Shivakumar Lamichhane (inspector), Navaraj Rijal (inspector) and dozen other police personnel. Dolkha district being near to Kathmandu valley, this case got good coverage in mass media, thus they were forced to let her off. Her private parts were ripped off, her womb was lacerated. In her article in *Janadesh* titled 'I will take revenge through battlefield', she showed political maturity by saying that she will not blame those police personnel who raped her, rather she accused the old feudal state what made them behave like animals to do this kind of heinous crimes. In Rolpa alone, village after village, there are cases of mass rape of Maoist cadres, sympathisers and innocent villagers. In Uwa, Rolpa district, four women were raped in 1998; in Harjung all available women including 12 years old Jaso Pun were rounded into a school and were systematically raped by the police force; in Oat on 3 August 1998, 47 villagers were rounded up and raped after forcing men to flee under the terror of gun by a police force of about 150. This is one of the reasons why today Rolpa has become main base area of PW, because people, particularly women had to join Maoist movement to take revenge on the old state. This revenge has been transformed into political consciousness by the CPN(Maoist) through its various organs of mobilisation.

After the promulgation of emergency and deployment of royal army there has been qualitative as well as quantitative shift in the way women

are punished. They have been not only brutally raped, but are also killed and sometime such corpses are displayed to the masses to terrorise them. On 10th April, 2002, a platoon member named Roza in Gandak region, who was twenty years old, was arrested in the morning. She was subjected to rape by fifteen armed forces, her dead naked body with tongue drawn out and tied with rope, both her breasts were cut, both her legs were torn apart wide open wide gash wound above her eyes were displayed to public for three days. On the fourth day the Maoist combatants managed to get hold of her body and duly cremated.

With press censorship during emergency and curfew promulgated, armed forces have been having field's day torturing and raping women. This becomes far more common and bold in more remote the region they operate. Similarly on 21st October 1998, Kamala Bhatt, the secretary of All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary) of Gorkha district was found murdered with her naked body thrown near the river bed. All these are deliberate strategies, which have been adopted to send the message that women should not be sent to challenge the present state. Today the RNA is trying to extend the culture of rape in mass scale by unleashing vigilantes on villagers by allowing them to rape women and burns the houses of villagers. They are using this tactic in areas where the Maoists are yet to consolidate their position. They are also unleashing local goons to do their dirty job for them.

Rape is a manifestation of men's power over women. When it is mixed with hatred, it becomes more violent and fascist. Thus rape as a biological instrument of repression has been deliberately and systematically used in any offensive conflict or war, in order to achieve tactical and strategic aim. Tactically, rape is used as a weapon to send the message to rebellious women that their place belongs inside their homes, and also the message to her family and community that daughters should not be sent in rebellious movements, organisations, parties. Strategically, rape is used to bolster patriarchal values, sexist ideology in order to reinforce masochism in armed force and to feminise the enemy, in order to conquer them. It also helps in brutalising their men with less chances of being hit back, as women are generally trained to be passive and docile. It also has psychological advantage of healing the wounded and defeated ego of armed men, especially when the armed force is badly defeated by the revolutionary forces. Usually any successful armed assault by the revolutionary force is followed by many search operations in the affected areas by the reactionary armed forces. There they generally go about raping women, burning houses and looting properties to vent out



their frustration and revenge. In many cases, the reactionary state agency encourages rape as a reward, a privilege for compensating for the rigorous barrack lifestyle of armed forces. Lastly, rape is considered safer violence as it is least reported, and even if reported, is difficult to prove. This is specially so in remote villages in Nepal, which are far to reach for the mass media and medical personnel to prove the rape.

However, use of rape as an instrument of repression by the reactionary forces has negatively benefited the revolutionary forces. First of all, the rape perpetuated is political in nature, thus, it reinforces the political message of rebellion. It is like any war-injury proudly proving their commitment to the cause for which they are willing to sacrifice. Unlike domestic or private rape where rape victim is made to feel guilty, this type of rape makes political statement, thus making the victim more determined. Secondly, such rapes expose the sexist nature of exploitative class-based state apparatus. Thirdly, they are able to expose the hollowness of reactionary ideology whereby, they use sexual force as an instrument of weapon against the ideologically equipped revolution. Fourthly, such rapes are able to transform the fury of raped victim, her family, and community into fighting force. Fifthly, the sense of helplessness, isolation that is generated among the masses by the state apparatus after every such mass rape episode is in turn transformed into organisational force, thus giving them security and sense of belonging to the new state. Sixthly, such acts on women have helped in forging unity between oppressed men and women to fight together against the state apparatus, thus making them more gender and class conscious. Such raped women are helped into rehabilitation by either encouraging them to join the movement or by involving them in building new state so that they forget the scar in the process of collective work. In fact the rapidity with which those raped victims have regained their strength through such measures is worth analysing. *[Take the example of Devi Khadka, who symbolised rape victim by the state apparatus; today she is happily married and a Regional Bureau Member of CPN(Maoist).]* Seventhly, such state sponsored rape is also exposing the so-called neutrality of various NGO sponsored women's organisations who have not spoken a single word against such heinous crime on women while they use to shout on top of their voice against the domestic violence. This also applies to some of the women's organisations under different political parties, who make tall speeches about women's exploitation, but shy away from making comments on state-sponsored terror on Maoist women or sympathisers. Eighthly, such pervasive behavior eventually

hits back on their own force in the form of being violent on their family members, or even to the point of raping their own wives, or their junior's wives, or making advances on their own women staffs. [*Take the case of police in-charge of Tharpu police post in Kalikot, Nepa Bahadur Shrestha; he killed his wife and then killed himself after brawl with his wife over his bad drinking and womanising habits. This was reported in Sarthi weekly on 29th August 1999.*] Here it is important to make some distinction, such rapes are usually carried out by the higher officers and are usually ordered by them to lower rung of police force to do the same after they have had the fill. Usually those who have shown leniency towards the victims have often been punished, sometimes even killed. Lastly, such mass rape is making a mockery of 'virgin worship', thus undermining the feudal culture. For revolutionary communists, rape is not considered as a moral issue as the ruling state might have wanted to. Instead they consider it as a form of state-violence specific to women with the aim to punish women for rebelling against their 'feminine role'. Such violence forces the communists to take up the gender issues as an important component of class issues, making them gender sensitive besides being class conscious.

In fact, increasing participation of women in Maoist movement despite their terror tactics has forced RNA to recruit women into their monolithic masculine army. They have been forced to take this step more for practical reasons than strategic. First of all, they no longer want women victims of present war joining the Maoists, secondly, they increasingly need women for intelligence network and for establishing mass contact, thirdly, they want to present before the world that RNA is gender-friendly and that it has a place for women. However, it will be worth analysing how the RNA with its feudal mindset will treat its women-force and how it will deal with rape, molestation of Maoist women prisoners and Maoist sympathisers in villages without affecting the morale of their own women-force. Or whether such acts will not hit back on their own women-force by the very same habituated brutal men-force? Or, how successfully it is able to brutalise its own women-force who may enjoy watching, or even participating in raping Maoist women? Such scene is not impossible to imagine as we have recently seen how the so-called civilised American women-force took turn to enjoy sexual exploitation, sodomising Iraqi prisoners in Abu Gharib prison along with the men-force.

The number of women being tortured, raped and killed during the nine years period of PW in Nepal has been phenomenal. However, there has

been very poor effort on the part of human rights organisations, civil societies, and organisations working for women issues to record and raise this issue responsibly. This may be due to lack of evidence, details and due to remoteness of place where they have occurred. It is the duty of CPN (Maoist) and its women front, *All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary)* to collect detailed informations (backed by photos of raped victims, if possible) or produce victims before the human rights organisations, so that the concerned culprits can be at least booked and punished. Similarly, *All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary)* should try to form united front with various other women's organisation to sensitise and protest against state-sponsored rape and to collectively protest against such heinous crimes against rebellious women. In that respect it is good that *All Nepalese Women's Association (Revolutionary)* called for Nepal bandh on 8th March to condemn the state-terrorism, massacres and rape of women in 2003. The recent exposure of brutal rape and killing of four Maoist cadres, Durga Bishankhe, Kaushila Pokharel, Revakala Tiwari and Renu Dahal in army custody by the RNA reported by *Jana Astha Weekly* in August 2005 is a bold step that should be welcomed. In fact, the opening of the office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal to some extent may help in curbing such human rights violations in Nepal.

Lastly, for Nepalese women, the deployment of RNA symbolises the last determining force representing monarchical system, the hallmark of feudalism and the number one enemy of Women's Liberation Movement. Hence, politically and militarily, women are all the more determined to fight against this feudal force which treats them as a biological force to become only baby-producing machines and to be relegated to domestic slavery.

In fact, the increased number of women joining the Maoist movement is also an indicator of the level of violence perpetuated by the RNA on women in the name of searching for the Maoists. It also reflects the social condition which forces women to opt for more dangerous, but more free and adventurous life.

5 September 2005

# People's War And The Question of Dalits

*"Social reforms are never carried out  
by the weakness of the strong;  
but always by the strength of the weak."  
– K. Marx to Working class;  
quoted in Francis Wheen: Karl Marx; 1999*

Man is a social animal. But today in the 21st century there still exists caste system in which dalits are rendered untouchable by so-called higher castes. So, their position is not sub-human but sub-animal. Dalit oppression is a typical phenomenon of South Asia. It is the product of the archaic and obnoxious caste-ridden Hindu society.

Historically the phenomena of caste system is the product of division of labour, whereby those who did mental work were categorised as Brahmins, those engaged in fighting work were categorised as Chhetris (*Kshatriyas*), those engaged in trade work were categorised as *Vaishyas* and those who did physical labour were called *Shudras*. During second millennium BC, at the time of *Rigveda*, such division of labour had not taken regimented form nor had they acquired class form. As a result, each person could choose any profession at any juncture of time. But with the coming of Vedic period, further development of agriculture resulted into ossified regimented caste system whereby the people started acquiring their caste hereditarily. Thus, Brahmins doing mental work got the highest position in the hierarchy and the Shudras doing manual labour were assigned lowest position in the hierarchy. In due course of time, even within Shudras further division of sub-castes took place and subsequently acquired regimented hierarchies within them. This regimentation was codified as *Varnashram* system of Hindu law by Manu, the Hindu lawmaker around 1st century BC. Today the same Shudras are called dalits.

Thus within natural economy, dalits became the first have-nots class who laboured manually but were forbidden to own their fruits of labour and means of production. As a result they made agricultural equipments but were not allowed to own land, they made houses for upper castes but were themselves forbidden to enter them, they made cities but were

themselves thrown out in the fag end of city settlement, they made idols of Gods, but were forbidden to enter the temples they made, they made shoes for the high castes but themselves went bare footed. Similarly, because they have been condemned to clear carcasses, they are eligible to eat only dead animal's meat. Similarly, they have been assigned the job of burning human corpses and as hangman for the ruling class to give capital punishment to the rebellious citizens and are condemned to wear cloths of deceased. Today things may have changed a little bit but in essence, the discrimination and alienation still exists. Even today, Hindus find cow's urine pure enough to drink but would not touch or drink water offered by dalits.

Today in Nepal, dalits constitute about 20% of the total population according to many non-government survey sources. About 80% of dalit population is living below poverty line. Most of them are landless and staying in other's land. Thus, they are under constant fear of eviction.

Before the entry of Aryans into Nepal, mainly Mongolians in mountain region and Austro-Dravids in flat Terai region inhabited it. Although Aryans have entered Nepal at two historical junctures, it was after 11th century AD when Hindus from North India fled from onslaught of Muslim invaders that they brought caste system in Nepal thereby inculcating caste awareness, particularly dalit ostracisation amongst non-Hindu communities too. Geographically, dalits in Nepal are divided into Hill dalits and Madhesia (Plain) dalits. Nationally, they are divided into Hill, Newari (dalits residing within Kathmandu Valley) and Madhesia dalits, of which Newari and Madhesia dalits belong to oppressed nationalities. Amongst the three, Madhesi dalits are worst off because they are poorer (70% of dalits in Terai are landless), there are more hierarchies within dalit castes and that is making them more disunited amongst themselves. Thus, they are more socially ostracised, because of influence of strong feudalism present in Terai region and lastly they are oppressed nationally, as most of them are without citizenship according to the old state (the old state treats all Madhesis as Indians).

It is an irony that even today in 21st century the old Nepalese state officially sanctions this archaic medieval oppression in the name of protecting state religion 'Hindu' under the authority of Hindu King. For the NGOs and INGOs, dalit issue has become one arena from where they can milk dollars, for the revisionist lefts it has become vote bank politics to milk dalits' aspiration and for the revolutionary communists it remained a theory awaiting fruition in practice.

## NGOs AND DALIT QUESTION

It is important to note that the caste system is a very important component of feudalism in South Asian context. Hence, both feudal and imperialist forces for their own ends use it. The feudal forces use caste system, particularly dalit issue to pit one religion against another and to pit one class against the other within the same religion. The imperialist forces use dalit issue to divide the oppressed masses in the name of giving them separate identity and propagate economic liberalisation as panacea for their oppression without deeply destroying the caste basis.

It is a fact that majority ruling oppressive class is far more class conscious than the oppressed class, precisely because they have to rule over the majority that belong to oppressed class. This it does by dividing oppressed class and then giving crumbs to few of them through NGO/INGO activities. Indeed the aim of donors is such that the poorer the community the more fund is made available to such communities. Hence, the dalits issue and within the dalits, women dalit issues sell like hot cakes for the NGOs and INGOs. Essentially all these projects aim at keeping revolutionary communists away from this community to blunt their class-consciousness. This they do by various means.

Dalits are given anti-Brahmin, anti-Manu and anti-OBC identity to such an extent that dalit identity becomes a sectarian community by itself. In the name of fighting against Brahmin culture, it itself becomes proponent of dalit-Brahminism, whereby dalit men and women are discouraged to marry those from other castes, religions or communities least they loose their dalit identity. Instead of breaking feudal production relation, cultural relation between dalits and non-dalits, NGOs/INGOs sponsor their separation by giving funds to build separate water taps, community halls, and temples in the name of avoiding confrontation with non-dalits. Instead of bringing together different hierarchies of castes within dalit communities in order to strengthen their unity, they encourage building separate organisation for every caste within dalit community and then creating competition within them to acquire funds. As a result, more well-off, educated and those from higher caste within dalit community (such as *Kami* dalits) land up benefiting more from such funds thereby creating more division within the dalit community. By doing so they also create middle class dalits who can be groomed as opportunist leaders for perpetuating class rule through parliamentary politics.

Similarly, many NGOs/INGs are found to have collaborated with Hindu fascists to incite communal riots. The Godhra incident in Gujarat, India, in the year 2003, which initiated communal riots between Hindus and Muslims in one such incident. It was found that many Hindu fascists operating NGOs/INGOs were utilising dalit identity crisis by giving them the impression of being victims of Muslim onslaught to fight against Muslim community.

Lastly, by taking advantage of the tendencies of dogmatist communists who in the name of swearing by class oppression have been neglecting dalit oppression within their own organisation, NGOs and INGOs have been successful in making inroads into such organisation, or area of their influence. Thus, they have been successful in winning away potential communist dalits or their sympathisers by poisoning their mind with post-modernist ideology.

All these make it all the more vital for the revolutionary communists to treat dalit oppression as a strategic and basic issue for the revolutionary movement in this South Asian region.

## **COMMUNIST AND DALIT QUESTION**

From the inception of Communist Party of Nepal (in 1949), dalit question has been one of the testing grounds for the high caste Brahmin/Chhetri communist cadres as to how truly communist they have become. This they did by daring to enter dalit house, drinking liquor with them etc. However, this simplistic cultural revolt seldom went to the extent of marrying dalits or giving them strategic position in the Party.

There have been three trends seen in Nepalese communist movement while addressing dalit question. One is revisionist trend, another is neo-revisionist trend and the last one is revolutionary trend. Revisionist trend treats dalit issue as purely economic, social issue to be solved through gradual reformation through parliamentary legislature. They tend to see it as a separate issue and hence in the name of giving special emphasis, identity, Communist Parties covertly or overtly have been allowing dalit issue to be hijacked by NGO/INGOs sympathetic to their parties, thus leading to right liquidation of dalit movement. Parliamentary left party, the United Marxist-Leninist [UML] represents this. Another is neo-revisionist trend, which tries to sound more revolutionary by treating dalit issue as class issue but avoid class struggle in the name of wrong timing, thus in due course of time they eventually become revisionist in a new form. Another parliamentary left party, Unity Centre Masal, represents this. The revolutionary trend treats dalit oppression as caste

oppression, as an important manifestation of class oppression. It thus integrates caste struggle within the larger class struggle. This trend is represented by CPN (Maoist). Thus, it not only gives importance to its dalit front, but also allows it to give specific form of struggle together with special rights in the new people's state. It also emphasises in militarising dalits by encouraging them to join people's army.

There are many reasons why revolutionary communists should address dalit question seriously. The first and foremost reason is that their objective situation makes them natural ally with communist ideology. This is especially for revolutionary communists for whom the question of transforming the world is very important and for Maoist Party particularly which gives great emphasis to Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (GPCR) where the slogan 'it is right to rebel' should have great appeal for dalits.

One of the main contradictions of dalit community, is that they are serving the most socially useful basic services to the society, such as cleaning streets, gutters, toilets, collecting garbage, carcasses, mending, making shoes, bags etc. However, they are socially ostracised by the very same society. This leads to self-alienation leading men to drink heavily to release their tension, and women taking to prostitution (*Badi* community), or surrendering easily to men's lust for meager pay. The other contradiction is that within their own community there exists concept of pollution and purity based on hierarchy of sub-castes thus making them further divided and weak. This utter alienation can be transformed into rebellion against the old state by making them atheist, universal and instilling proletarian spirit and sense of belonging to the new revolutionary state.

Politically, dalit movement has a strong anti-feudalist element, which has important play in new democratic movement. Capitalism removes all the religious, ritual shackles including serfdom imposed on dalits. The more complete the bourgeois revolution under the leadership of Communist Party the more favourable environment will be created for the next social revolution. Since New Democratic revolution is primarily applying dictatorship over reactionary forces and practicing democracy for the oppressed masses, dalits as the most oppressed amongst all oppressed people would be the closest ally to revolutionary communists. This is because they urgently need the instrument of dictatorship over the reactionary forces that are still practicing the archaic medieval oppression. And they need secular, democratic environment and advanced outlook to rid them of old decadent culture that have become



part of them in due course of historic subjugation. Also feudal forces have never given value to their work, which has so much social value and economic potentiality.

Dalit movement has a strong anti-imperialist element too, which can reinforce new democratic movement. Imperialism is not allowing national capitalism to grow thus not only robbing dalit's indigenous livelihood but also preventing them to upgrade and integrate their skill to higher more organised industries within the country. This includes usurping their natural resources with which they have been producing their products thus rendering them jobless.

One should remember that historically dalit community represented the first local have-nots force in the ancient Hindu world. Their traditional skill can be easily modernised to serve new industries including war industry in base areas. Because of dalit's historical working class material base, revolutionary communists must instill proletarian outlook on them. Also, New Democratic revolution helps in breaking localised natural economy in which dalit's skill is being chained thus paving way for urbanisation, industrialisation thus paving way for socialisation of the state in the long run. This will create basis for removing caste ostracisation within the society.

Lastly, dalits should also know that the so-called affirmative actions, positive discrimination, preferential treatment, anti-discriminatory laws, reservations etc. which constitute various forms of special provisions brought out by the old state to alleviate dalit problem merely become lip service in absence of coercive measure to implement them. Also the poor and landless dalits should know that any measures such as asking for 'separate electorate', 'separate settlement' or 'separate identity' for dalits or for that matter economic, political, social and cultural upliftment of dalits within this exploitative production relation will ultimately facilitate elite dalits to get absorbed into the ruling class state machinery.

Also revolting against Hindu religion in order to convert into Buddhism, Christianity or any other religion will cause dalits to not only postpone their problem but also land themselves in the midst of religious politics, which is retrograde in nature. Besides this, one can see that along with Hindus, all other religions, which include Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism etc., are eventually following the caste-system, at least in Indian context.

Hence, only class struggle together with specific dalit struggle integrated with class struggle and the institutionalisation of 'right to rebel' can transform this caste-based society and the backward dalit

community.

It is obvious that if communists do not address dalit issue as an independent integrated issue then the opportunist class within dalit community may limit it to identity politics thus encouraging communal, sectarian colour, eventually becoming victim to oppressing caste onslaught and becoming tool in the hands of imperialist and feudal forces.

## PEOPLE'S WAR AND DALIT QUESTION

*"To be advanced means  
to do the work of backward."*

*– Mao Tse-tung*

The specificity of People's War in Nepal is that CPN (Maoist) has been successful in mobilising all oppressed masses of Nepal, particularly women and dalit community that can be visibly seen. Dalit oppression being most pressing, deep rooted, characterised by absolute poverty, CPN (Maoist) has treated it strategically and has thus mobilised them under the banner of *Dalit Liberation Front*, Nepal. It has Dalit Department under the Central Committee of the Party to make policy on Dalit issues. CPN (Maoist) has brought important resolutions on this question by giving special right of representation in all Party, army and state organisations.

Here it is worth noting the differences between reservation right given to dalits by parliamentary and quasi-parliamentary system and the special rights given by New Democratic State. Reservation right is always an end product, a concession given by enlightened bourgeois class. Hence, dalits are always under their mercy. Such rights are given to either manufacture bourgeois dalits, if they are not already existent, or to perpetuate bourgeois dalits if they are already existent. And that too such reservation rights are given only in certain sectors. In contrast, special rights are won by dalits under the strength of class struggle, specific dalit struggle and institutionalisation of right to rebel. These rights are firstly holistic applying to all sectors, secondly, they give special emphasis on poor dalits and thirdly, they are being applied together with dictatorship over feudal and imperialist reactionary classes.

Their enthusiastic participation in People's War (PW) can be judged by the fact that the first martyr of PW was eleven years old dalit student Dil Bahadur Ramtel from Gorkha who along with other students had gone to release the headmaster from the clutches of police on 27 February 1996 and was shot dead. During the last ten years of PW hundreds of

dalits have sacrificed their lives, they include Comrade Prem Baraili, the general secretary of the *Dalit Mukti Morcha*, Comrade Chitra Bahadur B. K., Comrade Shankar Darlami, Comrade Bal Bahadur B. K., and Comrade Ram Kumar B. K. all Central Committee members of *Dalit Mukti Morcha*. Kalikot where 40% of population is constituted by dalits was once a bastion of dalit atrocity where they had to work freely for the high caste Thakurees, they were not even allowed to come into the compound of high caste houses. Today many areas, districts, regions under the new state are being headed by dalits. The head of Karnali-Bheri autonomous region belongs to dalit caste. About 20% of dalits are found to participate in Autonomous Regional People's Councils. Similarly about 20-25% of dalits are represented in Village People's Committees and District People's Committees. About 75% of dalit oppression has been removed throughout the country and about 90% in base areas around the country.

According to the report for 2004 in the special region within Middle command (there are all together 7 regions throughout the country) alone 50,800 dalit membership have been distributed, there are 1775 dalits in People's Liberation Army [PLA], 207 dalits have been martyred since the initiation of PW in 1996. In this region 17 Dalit Model villages are functioning where about 90% of population has removed dalit social ostracisation. Here 2,100 pairs have undertaken inter-caste marriage. Several inter-caste feasting take place time and again to remove untouchable status of dalits within the community. Similarly, several dalit marches have taken place in predominantly Brahmin-Chhetri areas to assert dalit identity and to boost the morale of local dalits to fight against dalit discrimination. Similarly, several marches exhibiting their tools, and implements are taking pace to assert their working class status.

"Grasp revolution and promote production" as said by Mao has been consciously applied on dalits by involving them actively in political, economic, military, social and cultural fields. They have been given special right of representations in the new state; in economic field their skills have been harnessed in war industry such as for making, repairing local made guns, automatic guns, grenade etc, making uniforms for PLA, militia, dresses for cultural teams, bags, rucksack etc. and in tannery industry. In military field, a big break has come. The old state had refrained them from joining military service. PLA and militia has given them platform to unleash their fury, PW has given them teeth to dalits by giving them revolutionary ideology and ammunition. Today they are able to practice dictatorship over reactionary oppressor class. Indeed

they are very excited to join PLA because it is in this field that fast rate of transformations are taking place. The untouchability issue becomes a crime in PLA and it is here that inter-caste marriage is taking place much faster. Social ostracisation is being reduced at two levels: at people's level and reactionary class level. In people's level inter-caste marriage, inter-caste feasts are encouraged, and any contradiction related to caste is solved through unity struggle and transformation. When it comes to dealing with reactionary class, method of first warning and then taking action against untouchability is done through people's court. This involves forceful entry of dalits to their houses, touching their drinking water taps etc. It should be noted that practice of untouchability has been termed as crime by the *Dalit Liberation Front*, Nepal. In cultural field, drunkenness associated with dalit profession has been removed through combined effect of women's and dalit's front. Similarly, importance of hygiene has been imported in their living environment. Their traditional skill of singing, playing music and dancing has been harnessed for revolutionary cultural field. With their increasing participation in all the instruments of the revolution and their skill finding importance in war industry, dalits have not only become more confident about themselves but are looked upon in dignified manner within the movement and outside it.

*Dalit Liberation Front*, Nepal is also involved in construction works such as building Shaheed gates (martyred gates), Choutaras (rest places), rebuilding burnt houses (burnt by old state) etc. It is interesting to note that while revisionist left parties are encouraging dalits to fight for their right to pray in Hindu temples, CPN (Maoist) is encouraging dalits to seize land belonging to Hindu temples and feudal lords thus shaking the economic foundation of both feudalism and religion. Just to give one example in Chatraganj village in Arghakanchi district in Western Nepal, land belonging to temple has been seized under the leadership of *Dalit Liberation Front* in the year 2004. Similarly in any land seizing, Dalits have been given preferential treatment in Party sponsored land distribution program. Also, several local milk depots that refuse to mix milk procured from Dalit households are either being boycotted or taken actions are taken against them. However, it is important to change the existing feudal economic base so that the new one can uphold these new progressive changes.

## **PEOPLE'S WAR AND DALIT WOMEN QUESTION**

Above all, PW has tremendously transformed the position of dalit

**People's War And The Question of Dalits**

women who had been bearing three types of oppression- class, caste and patriarchal oppression. They had been regular victims of domestic violence perpetuated by their frustrated drunkard husbands and have been repeatedly raped by police or higher caste men in any dispute involving dalit communities. Their image is relegated to that of loose virtue, sexual commodity that can be used and thrown away by upper class and castes. In fact, the *Badi* community who occupy the lowest rung within dalit castes, women in that community are the most wretched lot with parents acting as pimps for their daughters to practice prostitution. Since dalit oppression is deeply related in religion, rituals and social practice, eventually the dalit women are the ones who have to endure the most of it all. They are discriminated within their own religion subjecting them to untouchable status in their religious matters. They are generally cut off from the productive labour that dalits traditionally engage thus being relegated to producing babies and taking care of home. They are often abused and attacked for carrying the curse of dead, practicing witchcraft, sorcery etc by higher caste community. This has often resulted in forcing them to eat human faeces. They are severely beaten, sometimes beaten to death by stoning them. Madhesi dalit women are the worst victims of such practices.

Today PW has given them new identity, new strength. In fact, in the historic incident of snatching of arms from the reactionary police force in as early as 1998 by the rural women in remote Kalikot district, all the participants were dalit-women. Today they are found to occupy important posts in people's committees, mass-fronts, as commanders and vice-commanders of PLA. They also occupy important posts in cultural mass front. Today, Kalpana is the battalion commander of PLA in Western Command, she is dalit and wife of martyred Comrade Yodhha, the Dalit Brigade Vice-Commander from Kalikot.

### **SOME SHORTCOMINGS IN THE PATH OF COMPLETE DALIT LIBERATION**

It is said that social revolution takes longer than economic revolution; this is specially so when it comes to removing archaic, deep-rooted oppression like that of the dalits. However, what dalits have achieved in Nepal within last 9 years after PW was started, is certainly phenomenal. Today Nepalese dalits are way ahead of Indian dalits in the field of breaking caste barrier. There are, however, certain obstacles that need to be addressed for complete liberation of dalits. Within the Party, few

cases do continue to come whereby dalit cadres have to face awkward situation when they are not accepted in high caste families belonging to Party cadres, particularly in expanded areas of PW. Similarly, in certain parts of Nepal, dalit Party sympathisers complain that there is hesitation by the high caste Party organisers to mobilise and organise dalit community. And that it is only during the time of intense repression by the old state that the Party cadres come to seek their shelter. Such shortcomings should be corrected through regular rectification campaign within the Party. Indeed strong voices are often raised by dalit cadres to take strong action against dalit-offense as seriously as in sexual offense. At the people's level, social ostracisation has been waning due to active intervention of *Dalit Liberation Front* and due to actions taken by People's court in extreme cases. However, in the area of extension of PW, there is still some hesitation to accept non-Maoist dalits on equal term. Whereas Maoist dalit cadres can enter high caste houses without any obstruction, but local dalits from the same village are often discriminated. The challenge for the CPN (Maoist) in general and *Dalit Liberation Front* in particular is to remove this distinction between Maoist dalits and local non-Maoist dalits. At some places, oppressed nationalities have been found to be more conservative in accepting dalits on equal terms than the more enlightened Brahmins and Chhetris of the same region. This distinction can be slowly removed with the advancement of PW at higher level and by active intervention of *Dalit Liberation Front*. The spirit of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution together with continuous revolution as important starting point greatly helps in reducing such deep-seated phenomena. However, care also must be taken not to use force on dalits who are not yet willing to breakout their shackle's from their master's house without giving them alternative.

There are certain subjective problems with the dalit Maoist cadres, although they have achieved much empowerment. They have inferiority complex, servility towards higher power and divisive tendency within their own community, which is the result of prolonged historical subjugation by the higher caste people. In Party this is manifested by either hiding their identity before the masses or being too involved with exclusive dalit issues, not expanding their knowledge base, not actively involving in two-line struggle and by being hesitant to take leadership responsibility. In order to minimise such tendencies dalits themselves need to undertake criticism/self-criticism seriously to transform them, fortunately PW being protracted in nature, it allows space to transform these long held servility in dalits even before winning the central state.

It also allows higher castes to change their attitude towards dalits.

## CONCLUSION

*"The Communist revolution is  
the most radical rupture  
with traditional property relations;  
no wonder that its development involves  
the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."  
– Karl Marx: Communist Manifesto*

It was only after the initiation of PW that the dalit oppression started becoming a strategic issue. Targeting the old Hindu state as the main obstacle for dalit's emancipation, the *Dalit Liberation Front*, Nepal has rightly asserted that without anti-feudal and anti-imperialist people's state, dalit liberation is a myth. The Dalit front has been able to grasp correctly the dialectical relation between the ideology, organisation and the struggle, making dalit movement holistic. Today they are found in important posts in all the three instruments of revolution i.e. the Party, the people's army and the united front/mass front.

Revolutionary communists in South Asia should take up dalit question strategically. This is because today South Asia has become the storm centre of revolution. And subjectively this can be tapped only when they address the most pressing problem in this region. Dalit oppression is one such issue in this region, which has deeper political, economical, social and cultural ramification on the people of this region. Maoist Parties in this sub-continent must galvanise dalit community by considering them as the most reliable basic oppressed group for making New Democratic Revolution a success in this region. For this to happen dalits should be organised as a separate mass organisation just like women and other important mass organisations. Revolutionary communist should realise that in a long run this will enrich class issue and not dilute it as some dogmatist Communists tend to fear. It is only by applying concrete analysis of concrete situation that Marxism-Leninism-Maoism can be defended, applied and developed and in the context of South Asia, dalit issue demands such measures. By addressing various oppression issues, particularly dalit issue strategically, Maoist Parties help in breaking monolithic image of the Party by giving it a universal image, encompassing all tendencies, prevalent in society. It also helps in extending communist leadership amongst oppressed community thus helping to realise what Lenin had said". ... the Social

Democrat's ideal should not be a trade-union secretary, but the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects..." ('What is to be done' 1902)

Lastly, Communists must oppose not only dalit oppression but also the whole caste system itself, because it blurs or delays class-consciousness by preventing sharp class polarisation in the society between exploited and exploiting class. Dalits on their part must readily mobilise themselves under Maoist parties within South Asia because they urgently need instrument of coercion over reactionary forces and at the same time they need advanced mode of production, secular democratic environment and advanced outlook to come out of their backward culture. Being oppressed by even other oppressed nationalities and regions, they are in urgent need to unite with these communities in order to jointly combat the exploiting class. For this to happen, contradiction between these communities should be solved non-antagonistically. Only Maoist parties of this region can solve this with their advanced scientific outlook and mass line and revolutionary practice which instill in them truly atheist, collective, universal outlook. Dalits should also know that their complete liberation is linked with the liberation of other oppressed gender, nationality, regions and classes. And all these liberation are in turn finally dependent upon the successful application of dictatorship of proletarian class and the continuous revolution. It is important to note that co-operation and collective empowering of all oppressed communities can be possible only under the leadership of the proletariat because it has no gender, caste, religion, national identity except the identity of a class which has nothing to lose but its chains.

Finally, to those oppressed communities, who still oppress dalit community, they should note what Marx had said in the First International:

***"A People which enslaves others forges its own chains".***

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# **Nationality Question In Nepal**

## **INTRODUCTION**

National question has been one of the most important components of the New Democratic Revolution in Nepal. Ever since the establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) in 1949, the solution of the national question has been plaguing the communist revolutionaries, more than anything else and it has been at the centre of political disputes within the Party. As the present social formation in Nepal has been officially characterised by the Party as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, the 'class' and 'national' aspects, would both form inevitable components of the democratic revolution. Moreover, as Nepal is a multi-nationality state with several dozens of different nationalities at different levels of historical development inhabiting within its territorial expanse, the national question would have both 'external' (i.e. in relation to domination of world imperialism and regional expansionism) and 'internal' (i.e. in relation to the dominant nationality within the country) dimensions. In this context, the discussion of the national question at an international scale and among the communist revolutionaries with diverse experiences assumes particular significance for the ongoing New Democratic Revolution in Nepal.

However, within the limited scope of this paper we would confine our discussions to the brief theoretical premises of the national question, historical setting of the national question in Nepal, 'external' and 'internal' dimensions of the question in the context of Nepal, policy and programme of the Party and some concluding observations.

## **THEORETICAL PREMISES**

The national question has given rise to intense theoretical debate in the international communist movement. As elsewhere, there have been two extreme positions on this issue. One is to assign absolute primacy to the national question with a total neglect of the class perspective, and the other is just the opposite of this, that is, the total denial of the national question as a bourgeois obsession. Both these erroneous positions routing from a metaphysical outlook have been long ago demolished by Lenin (1913, 1914) and we need not dwell on the issue any more. It would just be enough to reiterate Lenin's exhortation:

"The bourgeoisie always places its national demands in the forefront and does so in categorical fashion. With the proletariat, however, these demands are subordinated to the interests of the class struggle." (Lenin, 1914:410)

For a correct perspective on the national question, it has to be viewed in historical materialist terms and in the concrete historical stage of development of society. This way it is seen in history that national movements have occurred only with the advent of modern capitalism and the capitalist economic logic of commodity production and a secure home market in the initial stage of development of capitalism seems to provide the material basis for the national movements. As Lenin succinctly puts it:

"Throughout the world, the period of final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, and there must be politically united territories whose population speaks a single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated. Therein is the economic foundation of national movements." (Lenin; 1914:396)

Hence, the formation of a national state with, a common territory, common language, common economic life and common psychological make-up (Stalin; 1912:13) is an inevitable outcome of development of capitalism, and in that sense the continued existence of a multi-national state is a sign of historical backwardness. However, capitalism has two historical tendencies in its process of development, which give rise to two different or opposite attitudes to the national question. Whereas in its initial stage of final triumph over feudalism the tendency of capitalism would be to shatter all fetters of pre-capitalist absolutism and bureaucratic centralisation and thus create independent national states, in the later stage of developed capitalism the tendency would be towards transcending national borders for commercial intercourse and bringing into the forefront the antagonism between internationally united capital and the international working class movements and thus laying the foundation of proletarian internationalism. Therefore, the correct policy and programme of revolutionary Marxists on the national question would have to be based on three pillars as specified by Lenin, namely:

- i) complete equality of rights for all nations;
- ii) the rights of nations to self-determination; and
- iii) the unity of workers of all nations.

(Lenin, 1914; Pp.. - 454).

That means the class conscious workers and the party of the proletariat would have to respect the genuine national aspirations of the masses, including the national bourgeoisie, as long as it is against pre-capitalist absolutism or imperialist domination, but must be cautious against the narrow nationalism that seeks to disrupt the unity of workers of different nationalities or nations.

In the present era of imperialism, a majority of the countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America has been subjected to intense imperialist oppression and exploitation of various kinds. As a result, the development of backward nations or nationalities by the stronger national capitalism has been thwarted in these oppressed countries and there have occurred only some islands of bureaucratic capitalism in the vast ocean of pre-capitalist formations. True to the "bigger fish eats smaller fish" logic of capitalism, the stronger among the bureaucratic capitalists, like the Indian monopoly capitalist, have developed into regional expansionism and exercised domination in the surrounding countries as an adjunct of world imperialism. Within the oppressed countries with multiple nations or nationalities, the dominant or the more developed nation or nationality is found exercising hegemony over the weaker or the more backward nations or nationalities. Thus the national question has two dimensions in the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America; one in relation to the domination of the whole country by the stronger imperialist or expansionist powers, and the other, in relation to the domination of weaker or more developed nation or nationality within the oppressed country. However, in the present era of imperialism as the weak national bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries cannot bring about democratic revolutions or lead national liberation movements on their own, the proletariat should lead both the democratic revolution and the national liberation movement in the oppressed countries. It is thus obvious that the national question is inseparably linked with the class question and would be simultaneously solved only through the New Democratic Revolution. This theoretical clarity is essential before we delve into the national question in Nepal or elsewhere.

## **HISTORICAL SETTING**

The present state of Nepal was established in the second half of the 18th century through the forcible annexation of nearly sixty petty tribal and ancient states scattered along the mountainous tract in the south of the Himalayas under the leadership of one of the ancient state chieftains, Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha. Prior to the formation of the unified

state of Nepal this mountainous stretch of land of about 500 miles by 100 miles in size had been a melting pot of migrating hordes from the Indian plains and the Tibetan plateau since about three thousand years. Shielded from the north by the high Himalayas and a thick malarial forest to the south, this region was occasionally raided but never got absorbed into the several empires formed in the Indian plains. People of mostly Tibeto-Burman or Mongoloid stock inhabited the eastern and central parts, whereas people of mostly Indo-Aryan stock occupied the western part of the region. Until the first millennium A.D., the petty tribal societies in this hilly region seem to have followed their gradual course of evolution, only exception being the highly fertile and strategically located Kathmandu Valley that had become the citadel of early civilization in line with the Greek city-states by the third century A.D. A new social epoch was ushered in the hilly region when after the 12th century A.D. there was a great influx of Hindu migrants of Indo-Aryan stock from the Indian plains in the wake of Moslem invasions there. The introduction of superior production technology with the attendant social division of labour long stereotyped into hierarchical caste and the establishment of petty feudal kingdoms through gradual assimilation of indigenous tribal communities in most of central and western hill regions by 14th century A.D., marked a qualitative change in the social and state structure of the region (Bhattarai, 1990). This also marked the start of the historical domination of the Indo-Aryan stock, particularly its upper caste strata of Brahmins and Chhetris, over the Tibeto-Burman and other stock in the region. The gradual expansion of British colonial empire in the Indian sub-continent touching onto the mountainous tract and the failure of the primitive economic formations of the hills to meet the increased needs of surplus extraction by the ruling classes, provided the historical premises for the unification of petty states under the leadership of one of the Hindu kings of the Indo-Aryan stock, Prithvi Narayan Shah, in mid-18th century. The processes of state expansion continued until the first quarter of the 19th century when the direct collusion with British colonial expansion limited the boundary of the state to the present level. The semi-colonial position was thrust upon the state with the ignominious Sugauli Treaty of 1816 by the British colonialists and has been further buttressed by a set of unequal treaties with 'free' India in subsequent years.

As the tenth descendant of the founder of the state of Nepal presides over the state even today and there has been minimal change in the socio-economic condition of the predominantly hilly region inhabited

by the petty peasantry, the basic class character of the Nepalese state founded over two hundred years ago remains almost unchanged even though cosmetic changes have been introduced into its outward form time to time. Also, since the present Nepalese state was founded not on a national basis of the pre-capitalist surplus extraction drive of the feudal ruling classes, internally, and collusion with the imperialists and expansionists, externally, it is obvious that the national question would remain unresolved within the present dispensation. Thus the historical process of development of Nepalese society and state has left behind two sets of national problems to be resolved by the New Democratic Revolution, namely, i) semi-colonial domination of all the nationalities by imperialism and expansionism, externally, and ii) domination of Tibeto-Burman and other nationalities by the ruling Indo-Aryan or Khas nationality, internally.

### **NATIONAL QUESTION: THE 'EXTERNAL' DIMENSION**

The 'external' dimension of the national question in Nepal can be discussed in terms of semi-colonial domination of Indian expansionism and neo-colonial domination of other imperialist powers.

#### **Semi-Colonial Domination of Indian Expansionism**

Indian expansionism as an heir to British colonialism in South Asia, has been the principal external enemy of the Nepalese people. Not only because of the geographically locked position from the three accessible sides (the northern side bordering China is virtually inaccessible due to the high Himalayan mountains) but mainly through the historically thrust upon unequal treaties and developed unequal relations, Nepal has been subjected to the semi-colonial domination of Indian expansionism. This domination can be discerned in the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres.

#### **Political Domination**

The 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of so-called peace and friendship, and the Letter exchanged with it is the basic document formalising semi-colonial domination of Nepal by Indian expansionism. The most obnoxious contents of the Treaty and the Letter are the so-called security commitments towards each other, restrictions to purchase arms by Nepal, "national treatment" to be given to the nationals of the other in one's territory and the virtual scrapping of the political border between the

two countries (Bhasin, 1970). The infamous 'Nehru doctrine' of the Himalayas acting as the northern border of India in the matters of security is too well known to be recounted here. The constant political manipulations exercised by the Indian rulers to put their puppets in power, armed intervention to crush rebellion in Nepal (e.g. Indian army operation to put down peasant uprising led by Bhima Dutta Pant in far-western Nepal in 1953, etc.) are enough examples of the political domination of Indian expansionists in Nepal.

### **Economic Domination**

Economic imperatives are the most important aspect of semi-colonial domination of Nepal by the Indian expansionists, which are ensured through a number of unequal treaties including the 1950 Treaty and the periodic trade and transit treaties. The basic form of this economic domination has been to keep Nepal as a captive market for the Indian manufactured goods, though other forms like exploitation of water resources, cheap labour, etc. are also quite important.

Over the years monopoly capitalists have been in near total control over the whole economy of Nepal including industry, trade and finance. According to one study made by an Indian scholar some decades ago, Indian capitalists control about eight percent of the Nepalese industry and trade (Rawat, 1972). Currently it is said that out of a dozen or so billionaires in Nepal most of them belong to the *Marwari* capitalists emigrated from India. The ever tightening of semi-colonial stranglehold of Indian expansionists over Nepal can be judged from the simple fact that whereas before the Sugauli Treaty of 1816 Nepal exported five times more than its imports to India, presently Nepal imports six times more than its exports from India. Though the total share of foreign trade with India has declined from a staggering more than 95 percent in the 1950s to about 30 percent at present, India is still the dominant trade partner of Nepal. The glaringly exploitative and unequal exchange relations with India is manifest from the fact that whereas more than 90 percent of the Nepalese exports constitute low value added primary products, over 70 percent of the imports from India are high value added manufactured goods. Similarly the unequal exchange relations applies in the case of export of cheap labour force from Nepal to India, including the poor Nepalese mercenary soldiers serving as cannon fodders in the India army.

Another area of economic domination by the Indian expansionists has been the exploitation of the vast water resources of Nepal, through a set

of unequal treaties or agreements, including the Koshi River Agreement (1954), Gandak River Agreement (1960) and the recent Mahakali River Treaty (1996). How Nepal has been duped through these river projects can be imagined when one realises that from the Tanakpur project at the border river Mahakali, Nepal is to receive a mere 7 mega-watts of electricity and 300 cusecs of water out of a total of 120 mega-watts of electricity and 20,000 cusecs of water. As the demand for commercial energy increase, in future Indian bourgeoisie will devise further means to plunder the massive hydroelectric potential of Nepal.

### **Socio-Cultural Domination**

Socio-cultural domination is just a means to or a result of economic and political domination by the imperialists and expansionists. Accordingly, India expansionists have sought to exercise social and cultural domination of Nepal through fanning Hindu religious jingoism, or through corrupting the young minds with pornographic Hindi films and magazines, or through exercising control over the print media.

### **Neo-colonial Domination of Imperialist Powers**

As Nepal was incorporated into the British colonial empire as a semi-colony until 1947, British imperialism had devised two ways of domination and exploitation of Nepal. One was to use the Himalayan state of Nepal as a political dependency and buffer state cushion against the Chinese empire in the north; and the other was to exploit the cheap, militant and non-Hindu labour force of Nepal in the British imperial army. After the departure of the British colonialists from South Asia in 1947 the semi-colonial legacy over Nepal was handed over to the Indian expansionists and only a part of the mercenary Gurkha soldiers were kept in the British army, which continues till today. Apart from this historical semi-colonial relation with British imperialism, Nepal is seen to have developed neo-colonial relation with other powers like Japan, Germany, USA and others only after the 1950s and 1960s.

Though the US imperialism tried to use Nepal as a political springboard against socialist China in 1960s and 70s, but after the capitalist restoration in China the US imperialist domination over Nepal has also taken more of an economic form than political. Other imperialist powers exercising domination over Nepal are mainly Japan and Germany and their form of domination is through trade and finance. Apart from the individual imperialist powers, the multilateral imperialist financial institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, the ADB etc., are also

increasingly exercising neo-colonial domination over Nepal.

However, because of the historical and geo-political advantage enjoyed by Indian expansionism over other imperialist powers, the former is bound to exercise an exclusive domination over Nepal even in the future and in that sense the question of Indian expansionism is practically the most important aspect of national question in Nepal.

### **NATIONAL QUESTION: THE 'INTERNAL' DIMENSION**

For its relatively small size, Nepal encompasses an immense diversity in racial and ethnic groups and economic subsystems, mainly because of its ecological differentials and peculiar historical experience of providing a safe haven for all sorts of migrant hordes from the north and the south. However, as noted earlier, the Hindus of Indo-Aryan stock that migrated into the area after the 12th century A.D. to escape the religious persecution in India and rapidly intermingled with the original Aryans, the Khas, of the western part of the region, have come to constitute the dominant racial groups that have forcibly subjugated the Mongoloids and Austric races, and after the forcible unification of petty tribal states, gradually developed into the dominant synthetic 'Nepali' nationality. The dominated Mongoloid (or Tibeto-Burman) and Austric racial groups were suppressed under the unified state power and were left behind in the evolutionary process. Only after the penetration of foreign merchant and financial capital since the 1950s leading to spurious and uneven bureaucratic capitalist development and ushering of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, have these dominated groups started asserting their rights and the nationality question started surfacing in the country. Hence, though the present state hegemonised by the rulers of Indo-Aryan nationality claims the contrary, Nepal is a multi-nationalities, multi-lingual, multi-religions and multi-cultural country (CPN (Unity Center), 1994) and the national or nationality question assumes serious proportions within the country.

At present in Nepal, there are several dozens of nationalities and ethnic groups at different levels of historical development but with their own distinct territorial base, language and other identities. Of these the ruling Khas nationality is naturally at the highest ladder of development whose language, Nepali, enjoys official patronage of the state. Next comes the Newari nationality in the Kathmandu Valley and the Maithili and Bhojpuri nationalities in the more developed parts of the southern Terai (plain) region. Then there are more than twenty non-Aryan indigenous



nationalities mostly confined to particular regions of the country. For example Rai, Limbu, Lepcha, Sherpa, Sunwar in eastern hills; Tamang in Central hills; Gurung, Magar, Thakali, Chantel in western hills; Tharu in western Terai and inner Terai; Dhimal, Rajbanshi, Gangai, Meche in eastern Terai and Majhi, Darai, Kumal, Raute, Raji, Danuwar in Inner Terai. Apart from these, there are distinct communities like Bhotes in the Himalayan region and Bengalis, in the Terai region, and religious groups like Sikhs, Jains and Moslems in the Terai.

Whereas none of these nationalities or ethnic groups constitutes a majority in the total population of the country, only the Khas nationality and its language exercise hegemony over and enjoy the patronage of the state and other nationalities and ethnic groups and their languages suffer domination and discrimination by the state. As a result, many of the indigenous ethnic groups like Chepang, Raute, and Raji etc. are at the verge of virtual extinction. In recent years different nationalities have started protesting against their domination and fighting for their equal rights in all spheres, which is quite logical and justified. But, as elsewhere, the reactionary ruling classes and their imperialist masters have sought to give the nationalities movement a communal and sectarian colour and divorce it from the overall New Democratic Movement in the country. It is therefore, the bounden duty of the revolutionary communists to take up the nationalities question seriously and make it a part and parcel of the New Democratic movement.

## **POLICY AND PROGRAMME OF THE PARTY**

CPN (Maoist), as the mainstream revolutionary Communist Party in Nepal, has given due consideration to the important national question and formulated clear policy and programme to solve this question.

### **On the 'External' Question**

Having characterised the present Nepalese society and the state as semi-feudal and semi-colonial, the Party has formulated the strategy and tactics of New Democratic Revolution to solve the problem. Accordingly, the 'National' aspect of the revolution has been given due emphasis in the 'Political Report' and 'Political Resolution on Minimum Programme' approved by the Unity Congress of the Party. (CPN (Unity Center) 1991). The Party has identified the contradiction of the Nepalese people with feudalism, comprador and bureaucratic capitalism, imperialism and Indian expansionism as the basic contradiction, during the period of New Democratic Revolution. Similarly, in the all important questions

of determining principal contradiction or the main enemy, the Party says: "At present the target of attack or the principal contradiction is the contradiction of the Nepalese people with the domestic reaction composed of feudal, bureaucratic and comprador capitalist classes backed by Indian expansionism". [CPN(Unity Centre), 1991; Pp.. - 60]. This identification of imperialism in general, and Indian expansionism, in particular, as the basic enemy of the people helps to formulate correct national policy programme for the New Democratic Revolution.

Accordingly in the 'Minimum Programme' on national question the Party has categorically declared that after the New Democratic Revolution all form of imperialist and expansionist domination and exploitation shall be ended, all unequal treaties shall be abrogated and relations shall be established with all countries on an equal basis. (op.cit).

### **On the 'Internal' Question**

On the nationality question inside the country, too, the Party has clear-cut policy and programme. In the "Resolution on Nationality Question in Nepal" adopted by the First National Conference held in 1994, the Party has declared Nepal as a multinationalities and multi-lingual country and having accepted the principle of rights of nations to self-determination, proposed autonomy for different nationalities keeping in view the low level of development of the nationalities and other specificities of the country. Among the 14 Point Programme for the liberation of nationalities include establishment of a New Democratic state with joint participation of all nationalities, ending all forms of oppression and exploitation based on nationality, language, religion etc., formation of a council of nationalities with proportional representation from the autonomous regions of nationalities along with the central people's congress, provision of equal treatment and opportunity by the state to all the languages, and so on.

Similarly, the Party has a clear policy to closely associate the nationality movement with the New Democratic movement and guard against both the right and the left deviation on the national question. A mass organisation called *All Nepal Nationalities Association* has been organising different nationalities on the above lines with some success.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In the present day world marked by superpower imperialism and in the case of South Asia dominated by Indian expansionism, the national question assumes great significance in the agenda of proletarian

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revolution. Hence, the Maoist communist revolutionaries in particular ought to do their best to divest the reactionary coatings off the bourgeois nationalism and make a judicious use of its progressive kernel to further the class struggle of the revolutionary masses. Nowhere it is more urgent and important than in the case of Nepal where the unity of all the progressive forces opposed to Indian expansionism and its puppets would be needed to thwart the impending danger of external armed intervention against the people's war led by the Maoist revolutionaries.

## Notes

1. Though there are at least nine organisations, and groups that use the nomenclature or claim the history of "CPN" at present, ranging from the revolutionary party CPN (Maoist) to the arch reactionary clips of CPN (UML) with several neo-revisionist and revisionist groups in between including NCP (Mashal), CPN (Unity Centre) and others, it is quite surprising to know that all of them formally characterise the present Nepalese society and state as 'semi-feudal and semi-colonial'. We would, however consider here CPN (Maoist), which has been leading people's war in the country and is a participating member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM), as the only real and mainstream organisation of communist revolutionaries in Nepal.

2. In the fiscal year 1994/95, total Nepalese exports to India was Rs. 3369.2 million and imports from India was Rs. 20791.2 million, with gross deficit of Rs. 17422.1 million (Source: Nepal Rastra Bank )

3. CPN (Maoist) was called 'CPN' (Unity Centre) prior to the third plenum of the Party held in March 1995. Hence, many of the published party documents still bear the old name of Unity Centre. This should not be confused with the rightist liquidationist group that still uses the nomenclature of 'Unity Centre'.

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# **Experience Of People's Power In Nepal**

While communications about the military successes of the People's War in Nepal have been regularly disseminated, little information has been made available at the international level about the achievements of people's power in the country. This article aims to rectify this situation somewhat by highlighting the emergence of people's power together with the progressive dissolution of the old monarchical state (ruling since 1769), with particular reference to achievements made in the Central Command which has the main base area, Rolpa.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the founding of the Communist Party of Nepal in 1949, the destruction of the old monarchical state and construction of the New Democratic State have been coveted dreams of most of the people of Nepal, where mass-based support for communism has been generally high. From the initiation of the People's War in 1996 up to the present period, around 80% of Nepal has come under the control of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), while the old state's presence is now limited to the capital, district headquarters, and highways. The hallmark of the People's War in Nepal is the rapidity with which the old state has crumbled, forcing imperialist countries to designate the old state as a 'failed state'. Today the king's last saving force, the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), is limited to its barracks and occasional forays of destroy and retreat into rural areas. This has been possible due to multiple factors, the first being the ability of the new state in the form of People's Committees to be strategically firm and tactically flexible in handling contradictions at the international, national and local level. Secondly, it has been able to place political initiatives ahead of military offenses. Thirdly, it is undertaking construction work along with the destruction of old state. Fourthly, it has addressed the oppressed nationalities, gender, regional and caste issues that neglected by the old state for long. Fifthly, it is a homegrown movement creatively using Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to analyse concrete conditions of Nepal and use this analysis as the basis for concrete action. Lastly, through its total war strategy, it

has been able to undermine the old state centrally using political offensives and locally through military strikes by destroying old rural bastions and filling the vacuum with People's Committees. The holistic approach of People's War has made it difficult for imperialist countries to term the Maoist movement in Nepal as 'terrorist' war.

It should be noted that all these have been made possible through sacrifice of thousands of conscious martyrs, including many office-bearers of the new state.

## **THEORETICAL PREMISES**

The question of state power is central to the revolution. In a country where Protracted People's War is being waged, the question of developing base areas has a strategic place in terms of supplying human-power, logistics for war and for psychological and ideological well-being. With the war entering a strategic offensive stage, the question of consolidating base areas becomes all the more important.

From the very beginning, even before People's War started, CPN (Maoist) was clear about the nature of the new state. It envisioned a New Democratic State, which would exercise people's dictatorship over feudal and imperialist forces, including expansionist states, while granting democracy to oppressed classes, caste, nationalities, regions and women. However, it was also made clear that this revolution may need to go through various sub-stages, zigzags taking into consideration Nepal's specific geo-political condition. Thus, in Nepal's case, the Party had already envisaged that the New Democratic State in Nepal should take the form of a class, national and regional United Front under the leadership of the proletariat. This is because a high percentage of the population in Nepal falls into the oppressed classes, with many different nationalities and regional divisions.

Taking note of the lessons to be learnt from counter-revolutions in socialist states, the CPN (Maoist) has passed a resolution on 'Development of Democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' in 2003. This resolution mentioned that the question of continuous democratisation of the state power leading to the withering away of the state is a thousand times more difficult and complex than capturing state power. Thus, the key question is how to combine the dictatorship of proletariat with elements of continuous revolution in running the state. This can only be done by putting politics in command of, and subjecting the state to control, supervision and intervention of the masses so that people's front goes on expanding while reactionary's base continues to shrink.

## DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE'S POWER

The concept of New Democratic State took concrete shape only after the initiation of People's War. The rapidity with which local people's power sprouted in different parts of Nepal can be judged by the way that the People's War by its second year had created a power vacuum in various rural areas, mainly in Western Nepal. Different levels of embryonic people's power started filling the power vacuum under the three regional commands in the form of United People's Committees. Initially, these areas were defined militarily in the form of main, secondary and propaganda areas. Within two and a half years, there was already a discussion about building up a base area in the main area of the western region due to its strong mass base and strong influence of the Party and is having favourable terrain, where elimination of social class enemies by the guerrilla squads and to a certain extent defeat of local military strength of the reactionary state in that region have already taken place. Thus, a call was given for conversion of main zone to base area and secondary zone to guerilla zone. By the fifth year of People's War, the Party had advanced the slogan: *Consolidate and Expand Base Areas. March Towards the Direction of Forming New Democratic Central Government*. In the same year the 'First National Convention of the Revolutionary United Front' consisting of the representatives of the CPN (Maoist), the People's Liberation Army (PLA), various class and mass organisations, local People's Committees and prominent personalities was held (in September 2001), which founded the *United Revolutionary People's Council, Nepal*. With this formation, the dialectical relation between the central United Front in the form of *United Revolutionary People's Council* intervening politically (in the form of calling national *bandh* and *chakka jam* i.e., strikes and general stoppages), calling for dialogue, constitutional change, etc. from the old state at the central level, together with exercising People's Power through various People's Committees at the local level, was defined enabling all-out attack on the old state. By the seventh year of the People's War (in 2003), nine nationalities and regional autonomous regions had been formed throughout the country – from west to east:

- 1) Seti-Mahakali autonomous region,
- 2) Bheri-Karnali autonomous region,
- 3) Tharuwan autonomous region,
- 4) Magarat autonomous region,
- 5) Tamuwana autonomous region,

- 6) Tamang autonomous region,
- 7) Madhesh autonomous region,
- 8) Newar autonomous region, and
- 9) Kirat autonomous region.

Out of these, the first two are regional autonomous regions and rests are national autonomous regions. Under these regions, People's Committees are functioning right from the district level to village to ward levels. While many of these committees are nominated, some are elected. The present trend is to continue increasing the elected committees. In order to consolidate, centralise and unify the work of People's Power, some ward-level People's Committees have been brought together to form 'Model Village', where generally almost all members of the households are organised under the Party, or mass front, or militia, thus making them a revolutionary iron fort for People's War. In these 'model villages', women and dalits have been given special rights of representation in People's Committees, women are granted equal right to parental property, and ostracisation of dalits is banned. The schools are run on the new syllabus prepared by Education Department of the CPN (Maoist) and they are being taught in their mother tongue. Today a number of communes in various stages of development are functioning, together with several agriculture-based co-operatives functioning in the base areas throughout the country.

It is important to note that one of the reasons why people's power was able to spread and consolidate so fast throughout Nepal is because of the background prepared by 'United People's Front' (UPF), a legal front for the then underground CPN (Maoist) before the People's War started. The UPF was able to expose the then monarchical parliamentary system and to propagate for the New Democratic Revolution (while being in parliament and outside of it) while spreading organisational network throughout the country that facilitated in converting the local organs of UPF into People's Committees after People's War started.

## **THE PRESENT STATE OF PEOPLE'S POWER IN THE BASE AREAS**

Out of the three commands – Western, Middle and Eastern – covering the whole country, the Middle Command has been chosen in this article as a focal command because the People's War has had the strongest impact in this region. Within this command there are two sub-regional commands: Gandak and Special Sub-region. Within the Special Sub-region all districts comprising Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan under the

Magarat autonomous region are being organised as the main base areas. Amongst these, the main base area in Rolpa is relatively older, more stable and consolidated than the rest. Within Gandak sub-region, secondary base areas under the Tamuwan autonomous region in the Northern Gandak and Magarat autonomous region in the southern Gandak are being organised. These base areas, however, are relatively unstable. In those areas which fall between the main base areas and secondary base areas, the vacuum created due to destruction of the old state is being filled by embryonic People's Committees. Similar situations with some variations are operating in the rest of commands throughout the country. The capital Kathmandu and district headquarters are still under the control of the old state, although the surrounding new states are able to impede in their functions through national, regional and local bandhs and blockades of goods by the new state that often paralyse the life in the capital.

With the promulgation of the Common Minimum Policy and Programme of 'United Revolutionary People's Council' and passing People's Power Directives as guiding line for running new state, the base areas in particular have started taking organised, systematic shape.

## **DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF PEOPLE'S POWER**

One of the first indications of the failure of the old state and emergence of the new state is seen in the judiciary. The mobile, locally based people's court was soon replacing the old formal court system. So popular was the people's court system that even those who did not readily accept the authority of the new state accepted the service rendered by the new people's court. Today the Public Code of People's Republic of Nepal 2003 is being followed to regularise and systemise the functioning of legal system throughout the country. By 2005, within the Special Region, one male and one female at the district committee level from each of the 11 districts had been given training, enabling them to function in the mobile people's court. Similarly, an open-jail system with labor camps is facilitating transformation of convicts into useful citizens. However, there is dearth of red and expert human-power. Although the Party and People's Committees are now relatively free from getting involved in day-to-day operations of the judiciary system, there are still tendencies to give justice straight from the Party or People's Committees without forming separate judicial commissions. As the base areas expand and consolidate, the organisational network of judiciary system needs to be further developed. Effective and efficient functioning of judicial system



helps in winning the confidence of the masses in the new state and hence in consolidating it. This also helps in transforming people, which is an important part of Protracted People's War. In addition, in light of the appeal made by CPN (Maoist) to United Nations and other international forums for the representation of the people's power (while opposing the so-called representation of the military fascist old state), the scientific functioning of judiciary by the local new states will give further legitimisation to its claim.

The People's Committees in the form of nominated bodies came into being once a power vacuum was created by the dispersal of police posts and destruction of the old state machinery. It was only in more stable periods that the People's Committees started being elected. Today at the central level, there exist United Revolutionary People's Council, mentioned above; at regional level various nationality or regional autonomous regions exist; and under these autonomous local districts, villages or urban wards exist. In all these levels, people's representative bodies and united people's councils are functioning. Except for the district headquarters and along the highways, the country is under the new state control. In base areas the People's Committees have taken a relatively more consolidated, unified and centralised form of rule, while in areas of expansion of base area, where People's Committees are not yet consolidated due to occasional interference from the old state, and as a result sometimes gives impression of existence of dual states. The understanding of People's Committees as being separate from the Party committees must be constantly hammered into the cadres and masses, so that more efficient and locally accountable functioning of new state-power can be expected and the People's Committees' more authority to act independently can be assured. Therefore, wherever possible, regular elections to People's Committees with the full power to recall must be regularly conducted, so that these Committees can be brought under the control, supervision and intervention of the masses more effectively.

The public administration as a separate body has not yet taken shape. The officials working in People's Committees themselves have been carrying out the administrative work. As the struggle has progressed, separate staff, official assistants, special committees of administration have started to come up. Many times ad-hoc commissions or committees are formed to minimise the administrative bottlenecks. With the growing war expenditure, regular record of expenditure is being maintained. The most visible presence of administrative work is the postal courier system, in the form of maintenance of mobile posts at different points of

communication. In absence of separate administrative body, officials of People's Committees are given basic administrative training. However, within the base areas, there is a need for developing a separate administrative body that could relieve officials of the People's Committees to concentrate on mass work.

## **PEOPLE'S SECURITY**

One of the main functions of the People's Security in the form of militias is to provide security to the base areas and People's Committees at various stages, in short, to safeguard the achievements of People's War at people's level. There are part-time and full-time militias, who are in essence future PLA-recruits. Thus, the function of people's security is also to expand the local military recruiting base for the PLA. In fact, all regional and national autonomous regions have been given the right to form their own militia in their respective areas. In big raids, they participate as a supportive force for PLA. They not only give protection to any central or local programmes held in their areas, but also provide logistical support to them. They give protection to injured PLA-members recovering in base areas after each major military strike. They also give basic defensive armed training to the local people. In addition to providing security, they also work as production-brigades in public construction work. In free time, they work as organisers too.

Because of the basic nature of military training given to militias, they are unable to give complete protection to the area of their operation when the reactionary force launches offensive attack. However, in isolated attacks launched by the enemy they are able to do a good job in defending people by co-coordinating with the local masses.

## **ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

The socio-political achievements of the People's War, including people's power, can only be sustained by building a new economic base. In a country like Nepal, where the state machinery, production, markets, and community institutions have been subordinated to, distorted, and shaped by the self-development of the global capitalist system over the course of the last two and a half centuries, that a process Marx encompassed using the Hegelian term 'subsumption' and Mao referred to in terms of 'semi-colonial' and 'semi-feudal', the aim of the New Democratic Revolution is to develop a national capitalist economic system, which is socialist in orientation, under the leadership of

Communist Party. The new state has rightly given emphasis to the agriculture sector, so that on that basis industry can re-develop. It is important to note that cottage industry was thriving until the 1920s, but was again dismantled by the World Bank's diktat in the 1990s.

In hilly areas due to small land holdings, the emphasis has been to form a co-operative farming system, while in the Terai region the emphasis has been to distribute large chunks of land confiscated from feudal lords to oppressed masses. Many fertile lands left behind by the fleeing reactionary elements and money-lenders and the public lands previously grabbed by reactionary old state officers have been converted into model farm land on which advanced seeds are produced and sold and new varieties of vegetables and grain have been produced as a demonstrative exercise for changing the crop pattern and food habits of the people. By co-coordinating with the physical infrastructure development, many small-scale irrigation, hydro-electricity, water mills and road networks have been constructed to boost farm production. Forest nurseries, water conservation pools, check dams together with forest defense force have checked the deforestation process, which was rampant earlier, and now have helped in reforestation. A most remarkable example of community-based check on deforestation is the Jaljala forest, which was endangering Thawang Village, the main base area in Rolpa, through frequent flooding of the river that flows through it. There are three communes operating in various stages within Rolpa and Rukum, which are acting as models for those involved in co-operative farming to emulate. Agriculture works have been centralised in main base areas, agro-vets have provided 1-2 month's basic training to the villagers and party workers. However, there is problem of protecting these supervised model farmlands from the reactionary army in their military operations. Many houses in Zelwang commune were set on fire by one of such military search operations.

In main base areas, the food, cotton, shawl, garment, soap, candle, paper-making and tannery industries are all functioning. They are mainly catering to the needs of the Party, PLA and People's Committees. However, there is a problem to acquire raw-materials, which are mostly imported from India. Also, still there is the problem of producing quality products and that too economically.

Regarding finance, commerce and revenue in base areas, there are many consumer-based co-operative shops running, including restaurants run by various mass fronts and People's Committees. There have been efforts to regularise private, industrial and commercial undertakings by bringing

them within the taxation regime of the new state. Regarding banking operations, a rudimentary form of mobile banking is operating by pooling shares from Rolpa, Rukum and Salyan. At present in Rolpa alone, 1 million from Thawang, 400 thousand from Bhawang and 100-150 thousand rupees in Kureli have been pulled in to operate as a bank with a 13% interest rate. Due to the security problem, the safeguarding and networking a banking system is difficult. Also, there is lack of experience in running a people-based banking system in a professional way. Hence, these banks are in their primary phase of services.

Following the mobile people's courts, the physical infrastructure work is most sought after. Popular works carried out by various mass fronts, PLA and People's Committees include construction of pedestrian tracks, horse trails, irrigation systems, mill works, new school buildings, child-care centres and other public buildings. They also include paving village roads and making green roads, providing piped drinking water, digging ponds, storing rain water, redesigning and remaking burnt down houses, making rest places and martyr gates. In short, all these activities are proof of how the new state is able to unleash the talent and energy of the population. Of late, the construction of 91 km motor road from Dahavan to Chunwang and Thawang in Rolpa District by the people is worth noticing. It has enhanced the image of the Maoist Party as a responsible, mature party, good not only at destroying the old state but also at constructing the new state.

## **PROVISION OF PEOPLE'S HEALTH, EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

What started as field medical team for treating PLA-members, increasingly expanded to serve the civilians. Today, the medical capacity of the PW-medical team continues to expand with growing formation of army along with its engagement into higher-level of military actions. Today, except for compound fracture, head injury and stomach injury, PLA-medical teams handle most of the treatments. A directive on co-operative medical management and public health has been published, enabling to run medical centres on co-operative basis to provide medical services. New health workers at different levels are being developed by providing medical training (in accordance with their educational background) conducted by experienced paramedical practitioners who have joined the movement. With practice, such new recruits are able to develop their skill much faster. Mobile medical teams are tied closely with communities and are a life-line for the injured war victims, including

injured PLA members, and thus are able to provide much more effective services than the mainstream medical establishment, which has been largely absent in the countryside.

However, medical teams lack skilled human-power, especially full-fledged doctors specialising in surgery and other fields. The old health posts run by the old state have been regulated by the new state by asking them to follow a new code of conduct making them accountable to the people. Also, the old state-run health posts donate certain percentages of their medicine to the medical teams of the new state.

In the field of education, the People's War has directly intervened in existing schools with introduction of a new syllabus and teaching in mother tongues. In some places, particularly in model villages, new schools are being constructed and run by the new state. The curriculum for the classes 1 to 3 and a training manual have already been prepared, as well as a draft curriculum for the social sciences for classes 4 to 10. Similarly, a *New People's Education: Curriculum Introductory Teacher's Training Manual 2004* has been prepared, and already 31 teachers teaching in schools run by the new state in Rolpa have received training. Privately run schools are totally banned in all the main base areas.

In areas of expansion of base area, however, there is a policy of partial intervention in existing schools by asking the teachers not to teach any materials that strengthen the old regime. The national anthem in praise of monarchy is prohibited and is replaced by the 'International' song, or another song. Privately run schools are discouraged. In urban centres and district headquarters, struggles are under way to reduce fees charged in privately run schools and to provide facilities as promised. However, in base areas, after the tenth class problem of obtaining recognition under the new syllabus becomes difficult. Also, there is difficulty in acquiring skilled teachers.

Since transformation of people is one of the important aspects of the Protracted People's War, the process of destroying the old feudal culture and replacing it with a new progressive culture has been taking place. In base areas in particular, in place of the old culture, a new culture to celebrating eighth. March (International Women's Day), 13th. February (the historic People's War initiation day) and a weeklong Martyrs' day celebration etc. have been promoted. Old practices such as child marriage, polygamy and polyandry, and incurring debts in birthday, marriage and death ceremonies are being slowly replaced by new practices: love-based marriage at adult age (20 for women and 22 for men), monogamous marriage, and simple observation of birthdays,

marriages and death ceremonies. Similarly, liquor consumption has brought under control, thus relieving women from harassment and poverty. Countrywide, regional and local-level liquor bandhs (strikes) have helped in discouraging liquor consumption. In Base areas limited private consumption of liquor is allowed (as liquor consumption is a part of Magar culture) provided it should not disturb public tranquility. Foreign-made liquor is totally banned in base areas, as is the sale of homemade liquor. In urban and district headquarters, there are calls to ban beauty contests, letters are being sent to beauty contestants not to participate or not to accept their titles, if they have already participated in these contests. Similarly, sexual exploitation of women in massage parlors, bars and restaurants is being discouraged by threats of sabotage. Progressive songs, dances and dramas are being propagated in place of old idealist feudal songs, dances and dramas. Witchcraft and other superstitious practices are being brought under control. Everywhere community-based projects are encouraged. This is reflected particularly in community-based fodder collection, farming and husbandry works that are part of the farm co-operative movement. With occasional cleanliness drives launched by various mass fronts including the new state, people are getting conscious of the importance of maintaining a healthy environment in and around the households.

## **SOCIAL WELFARE**

Several new organisations such as the Martyr Family, People's War Sacrifice Family, People's Army Family and Cadre Family have been formed to address the special needs of the families of these people. They have been organised to become active participants in the new state. Several childcare centres and hostels have been constructed to house children of martyred parents, full-time workers, and poor masses. Several model villages have been organised in the base areas to consolidate people's power. In the villages, where women are not facing exploitation, women have been granted equal parental property and a special right to have equal representation in the new state (50%). Similarly, dalits have been given special right of representation in the new state (20%). In these model villages, all the members of the families are organised in one mass front or the other, thus they stand out as an iron fort for the PW. Here it is important to note that the use of the 'Republican Nepal FM-Radio' run by the Party to disseminate new cultural and social welfare measures to communities, along with disseminating news. Directives such as asking parents to give equal property rights to their

daughters, asking them to shed long cumbersome dresses for more workable dresses, long hair for shorter hair, etc. are being propagated daily. Similarly, warnings about discrimination against dalits are being spread through the FM-radio. Today, listening this FM-radio has become a daily way of life for the people in rural Nepal.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS, LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES**

One can proudly claim that the otherwise small obscure archaic monarchical state of Nepal, which hardly existed in the political map of the world, today has become a focus of attention not only in this region, but across Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Today, officials of the United Nations are frequently visiting Nepal. All this could be achieved not only through the force of rebellion, but because this rebellion has introduced a new system of state, a new value of life which bases itself on science, not religion; on responsibilities, not bondage and debt; on a universal outlook, not on obscure past values; on emancipation of women, dalits and oppressed nationalities and regions, not playing upon their vulnerability and oppression. And all these have been made possible by the most wretched of the earth, who are otherwise languishing in other parts of the world including the so-called 'developed' world. People's War has indeed unleashed their creativity and energy, making them the new rulers with more responsibilities, precisely because they belong to majority human productive force, which produces wealth not for individual accumulation but for collective gains, making humans truly social. Within Nepal, the new emerging state has shifted the focus of politics from Kathmandu-centric one to a rural-centric one. Today, the people and interests making up the old state, including parliamentary parties, are forced to address long-neglected issues. The People's War has undermined the old state's feudal base, which still exists in so-called democratic countries. However, the challenge today is to build national capitalist economic base under the leadership of proletarian party. Lastly, it has sown hope among the working classes of the world that another world is possible and that the end of history will not come, despite the wishful thinking of ruling class propagandists, as long as people struggle.

There is inherent contradiction in the objective reality. Although, according to UNDP figures, this country is the second poorest in the world, it is the place where the most wretched masses are applying the most advanced scientific ideology to do away with their backward political system. Thus, there is bound to be some contradiction between

subjective efforts and objective realities, both within the Party and outside it. The second contradiction is that although at one end the Maoists hold most of the country, central state power remains concentrated in Kathmandu under the old state. As a result, running a new state is yet to take a comprehensive form.

Even within the new state run by CPN (Maoist), there are many shortcomings of political and technical nature. Often military victories are not transformed into consolidation of base areas or existing people's power and their expansion. This in the long run may lead to militarist tendency, isolating the Party from the masses. There are still some problems of overzealous operation of the People's Committees in terms of relying more on force than on political conviction to yield results, especially with regard to changing old habits and enforcing new ones. Clear demarcation between the Party's functions and the People's Committees' functions must be made, so that People's Committees can exercise more power and function smoothly. In a number of areas, uniform code (with local variations) is yet to be made. Considering that the People's War is protracted, it is important to centralise and concentrate existing skills and facilities so that more effective results can be achieved rather than dissipating energy in many fields without much result. Hence, more model villages must be built up. Also one should take note that over-involvement of the masses in programs and meetings of the Party and their under-representation in running the state will also alienate the masses. Therefore, wherever possible, regular elections to People's Committees must be conducted. This also helps in checking bureaucratisation of the new state by putting it under the control, supervision and intervention of the masses.

Lastly, it is only by defending, applying and developing proletarian science of revolution that the new emerging state in Nepal can be defended and developed. From that point of view, "Development of Democracy in the 21st Century" needs to be practiced and seen in the new state. It is also the duty of other revolutionary communist forces and International Communist Movement to defend, apply and develop the proletarian science of revolution so that it will help unfurl the red flag over Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) in Nepal – the highest peak in the world!

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# Women And The Democracy Movement

The Himalayan country, Nepal, simmering with discontent for the last 30 years, finally exploded on April 6, 1990, and is now passing through historic transformations. The so-called partyless panchayat system was forced upon the people of Nepal in 1960, after the late King Mahendra staged a military coup against the then parliamentary system. Under the active patronage of the royal palace, the panchayat system virtually reduced this otherwise self-reliant country into an ever-begging country. Nepal is fast sliding towards first position amongst the poorest countries in the world with its per capita GNP of \$ 160.

The main problem with the panchayat system was that it was a partyless system, and didn't allow opposition parties to play their role. As a result, there was no system of checks and balances. Corruption, nepotism, red-tapism was the result.

It was not that the panchayat system altogether ignored women. In fact, under the second constitutional amendment there was a provision that there must be at least one women representative either by selection or by nomination in each village *panchayat*. However, as for the rest of the panchayat system, leadership of women was imposed from the top. As a result, they never represented the women of Nepal. *Nepal Mahila Sangathan* functioned as one of the class organisations of the panchayat system. It had a wide network of organisation units within the country. However, it operated more as a showpiece, its main function being to organise the birthday of the Queen. How ineffective this organisation was is proved by the fact that it never gave any statement condemning even the most heinous crimes against women. The organisation did nothing to prevent trafficking of women to India. In many areas like Nuwakot, Sindhupalchowk, the local *pradhan panchas* [chief of the Panchayats] played a key role in procuring these women for prostitution.

The Panchayat system bred goons, who were used to intimidate active students. The system would even use its reserve of Karate and Tae kwondo players to punish the active leaders. This was specially so during the recent democracy movement. In fact, the raiding of the girls' hostel in Pokhara was done jointly by police personnel and hired ruffians. These hooligans perpetrated rape and eve teasing while the state did

nothing to control them. In the name of Hindu religion, the rights of women were badly curtailed, while blue video movies were openly shown in the lanes of cities like Kathmandu, Dharan, Biratnagar, and Pokhara. In the name of encouraging tourism, the government played silent spectator to the growing prostitution within the country.

Unemployment is widespread and large numbers of Nepali youth are forced to migrate to India to do all sorts of unskilled jobs. According to Dr. Gilada of the Indian Health Organisation, about 100,000 Nepali girls land up in various prostitution centers in India every year. More than 35 percent of prostitutes in Bombay (Mumbai) alone are of Nepali origin.

The despotic panchayat system stayed in power for 30 years because the opposition was weak and disorganised. It was the historic alliance between the otherwise banned Congress and Communist parties which provided confidence to the people to root out the panchayat system.

### **Women in the Movement**

One new element of the recent movement was the participation of women, children and old people. The different programmes organised by various political parties were able to mobilise all sections of the people, from pilots, engineers and doctors to housewives, the aged and schoolchildren.

The movement was directed not only against the dictatorship but also against hunger. Women are the first victims of hunger, the first to feel the pinch of scarcity. With the growing inflation in Nepal, especially after India enforced an economic blockade on Nepal in March 1989, scarcities had reached intolerable proportions.

Before February 18, the date declared for the launching of the movement, an incident in Pokhara on February 12 had already prepared the ground. On that day, hired ruffians and storm troopers along with the police raided the girls' hostel on Prithvi Narayan Campus. That day the students had organised a meeting to celebrate the release of Nelson Mandela. The girls were dragged out, stripped naked and mercilessly beaten. They were then dumped into trucks and taken into police custody. The worst victim was Ms. Laxmi Karkee, a student leader. She was widely rumored to have died in custody but managed to survive. In her own words: "Lathis, boots and fists were showered on every part of my body. I told them that some day people would punish them. The police then showered blow even more severally and pierced lathis into my private part. I fainted. When I regained consciousness I realised that all

my clothes were in tatters, and when I asked for water I was abused and told that I deserved urine". The very fact that this gruesome incident took place right under the nose of royal family holidaying in Pokhara, enraged the people.

On February 20, in Jaduguwa village, Janakpur district, three women were shot dead. The incident took place when a group of policemen went to arrest one of the activists. Women protested and they were suddenly sprayed with bullets, as a result of which many are wounded. Janaki Devi Mandal, aged 50, and Bhubaneshwari Yadav, aged 46, and Sonawati Devi Yadav, aged 30, were killed on the spot.

On February 22, about 100 women in Biratnagar participated in a silent protest march, their mouths covered with black cloths. They had come out to protest against harassment of women and children by police patrols on the pretext of searching for activists. They also demanded democracy in Nepal. About 25 women were arrested that day. The same day in Hetaunda, about 50 women were arrested from a protest rally. In Butwal, in Western Nepal, five women activists were arrested from a protest rally.

On March 8, International Women's Day, women from all walks of life assembled in Padma Kanya (Women's) College in Kathmandu. They tied black bands on their arms to protest against the atrocities in Pokhara and Jaduguwa. Professional women and housewives spoke and voiced their firm pledge to fight for democracy and to overthrow the government. Five participants, including myself, were taken into police custody.

In Jhapa, in the east, about 500 women participated in a rally to celebrate International Women's Day and to protest against the government. About 1,000 women in Siraha took to the streets demanding democracy. In Biratnagar, about 200 women participated in a protest rally and four were arrested. In Palpa, in the Midwestern region, five, and in Butwal, about 33 women activists were arrested.

On March 13, about 2,000 women led a huge protest march in Narayanghat. They came onto the streets with their children, armed with sickles. About 200 women were arrested and taken into the dense jungle of Chitawan. They were detained there for three days without food, shelter or security.

On March 20, the coordinating committee, established to coordinate various professional organisations, had arranged a seminar on "The Role of Intellectuals in the Present Context of Nepal." All 700 participants and the speakers were taken into custody. Of these about 40 were women,

of whom four, including myself, were jailed. The presidents of two human rights associations were also arrested.

On March 31, an unprecedented mass upsurge of people of Patan, in the Kathmandu valley, liberated the city from the clutches of panchayat administration. Old people, children, and women took to the streets in large numbers in a spirit of do or die. Women farmers were armed with agricultural tools. Community kitchens were established at important junctions.

The liberation of Patan encouraged the people in Kathmandu city. On April 6, the streets of Kathmandu swarmed with people protesting against the royal declaration that had not given any sign of doing away with the panchayat system. This day was a turning point for the movement. Every residential area voluntarily organised distribution of water, sometimes even oranges. Water was sprinkled from the tops of houses to cool off the protesters. People swarmed towards the palace, but before they could reach there, they were indiscriminately fired upon. More than 200 people died in indiscriminate firing on that day. Among them were several women, including 11-year-old Rekha Rizal.

Another new element of this movement was that even school children took to the streets, shouting: "We want democracy!" Tear gas was thrown into school premises and school children taken into police custody. Old people, including women, mobilised themselves in their own way. For example, one programme was assembling in temple complexes to offer prayers in support of the movement. There was also a programme of beating empty utensils and plates to protest against rising prices, in which housewives participated. Blackouts called by political parties mobilised almost every household in support of the movement. Those houses defying the blackout were stoned.

Women also helped the movement in many indirect ways. Before the planned protest march, many activists had to go underground because arrests had begun much before February 18. Women and children helped to pass messages and safeguard activists from arrest.

Ironically, one method used to mobilise inactive communities was sending them *chura pote* (bangles and beaded necklaces worn by women). This gesture symbolised the cowardice of these inactive communities. When the first incident of violence occurred in Bhaktapur, in Kathmandu valley, where 12 people were shot dead, the people of Bhaktapur sent *chura pote* to the people of Patan. Patan was mobilised and then sent *chura pote* to Kathmandu. There were reports of the sending of *chura pote* to other places like Dharam and Birganj.

After negotiations between the royal palace, the Congress party, and the United Left Front, the 50 day movement finally simmered down. The *panchayat* system was dissolved and a multiparty system was declared within the framework of the old Constitution. Right from the formation of the interim government, I have not been satisfied with the way things are going on. The interim government committed a big political blunder by compromising with the royal palace without smashing the old *panchayat* Constitution. The whole movement was to overthrow the *panchayat* system but the present interim government was in such a hurry to form its government that it didn't bother to root out the *panchayat* Constitution. As a result of the conspiratorial role of the palace, the present government is virtually ineffective. To top it all a polarisation is taking place. The royal palace and Congress are aligning against the communist forces. In Nepal, the communists are a growing force and as a result, Congress needs the royal family more than the king needs himself. The manifestation of this alliance is clearly seen in the incident of the Teej festival. On August 23, the day of *Teej*, when women all over the valley assembled in Pashupatinath temple to dance and sing, the Queen's car was brick batted by the people gathered there. I was taken into custody for intense interrogation. They were trying to project me as an extremist, as a terrorist. There is a strong rumor that the incident was planted by the palace to gain the sympathy of people and to sabotage the reform of the Constitution that undermines the position of the royal palace. Afterwards, I was subjected to intense interrogation in police custody on account of the *Teej* incident fresh warrants have been issued for my arrest. In fact, warrants have been issued against all the top women activists of Nepal following the stoning incident. The drama of pelting stones at the Queen's car has been used as a good excuse to harass and intimidate the activists of the recent movement. Among those implicated are Laxmi Karkee, the heroine of Pokhara episode and central executive member of *All Nepal Women's Organisation*, Pampha Bhusal, the general secretary of *All Nepal National Women's Forum*, and Brinda Pandey, the president of Kathmandu unit of *All Nepal Women's Organisation*. There are more than a dozen male activists who have likewise been implicated in the same case. We all will be charged under the State Offence Act under which the maximum penalty is death, the minimum penalty is 10 years rigorous imprisonment. Already 12 have been taken to jail under this case (they were taken into custody immediately after the *Teej* incident). This conspiracy has been hatched against all of us by the royal group

and Congress party to do away with the left supporters and left members.

The United Left Front is quite ineffective as they are being dominated by the Congress and the royal family. Hence, I am in hiding these days<sup>22</sup> I was later taken into custody and released only after intense pressure from civil society.

All those warranted and arrested are either sympathisers or members of left parties. As a result, till date no new Constitution has been promulgated. Although the new reformed Constitution has been drafted by the alliance of three groups, Congress, Communists and the royal palace, the royal palace is intervening to reform it in a manner that favours them.

No fundamental changes have been introduced in the laws relating to women. Not much has changed in their daily lives either. Women of Nepal have no claim on parental property. Only unmarried women over the age of 35 can share parental property and they must remain unmarried if they are to retain this share. Married women can claim a share in the husband's property only after 15 years of conjugal life or if they are over 35 years of age. After divorce, women are not entitled to a share in their husband's property. Abortion is illegal in Nepal.

### **Women's Organisations**

What is more exciting, however, is that many women's organisations have sprung up after the movement. Some of them, especially those affiliated to political parties, were functioning underground during the panchayat period. Already many activities are taking place. There was a mammoth rally of women organised by the *All Nepal National Women's Forum (ANWF)* in the open-air theatre. This is the something very new and daring in Nepal because it had never been allowed under the panchayat system.

Another programme that created quite a sensation in Kathmandu was the protest against the beauty contest and fashion show that was to take place in a five star hotel. Women and men organised by *ANWF* went ahead with the protest programme and managed to stop it. It was quite a challenge for us because we had to travel a long distance to protest by 8 p.m. However, we were overwhelmed by the turnout of women, numbering about 100. One good thing so far is that men help us in our efforts. This particular incident created a controversy in our society.

*All Nepal Women's Organisation* called a mass rally against the rape of an 11-year-old girl by hoodlums. In the first week of July, a rally was organised in Dharan, in Eastern Nepal, against the escalating prices.

About a dozen women's organisations are actively operating in Nepal today. Most of them are affiliated to political parties. What is missing is a spirit of close cooperation among them. Just as political parties are suspicious of each other, so are the various women's organisations.

Besides these active organisations, there are other women's organisations which live on foreign donations and arrange seminars in five star hotels- these are not at all action oriented.

I am a member of *ANWF*, which does not have any party backing. Women involved in it are mainly left sympathisers. The president of this organisation, Ms. Parizat, a 50 year old, is a famous writer who has written several novels depicting the plight of women. We have started *Asmita*, a monthly 10-page publication of poems on women and we sell it for Re. 1. Our idea is to encourage women to express themselves. We are apprehensive about women's position in the new reformed Constitution since complete sovereignty of the people is not yet guaranteed. The very fact that there is no women's representative in the nine-member Constitution reform Committee is a matter of concern. In the present interim government Shahana Pradhan, the only woman amongst 11 members, holds the portfolio of commerce and industry.

The issue of inheritance rights is now being raised by all women's organisations. The latest issue of *Manushi* on women's inheritance rights was very useful for us. The interim government is amending the old Constitution and women's issues will also be taken up.

Hence, the movement for women's rights in Nepal has only just begun.

This article was published in *Manushi*, No. 60, Sept.-Oct. 1990 with the following note:

"Hisila Yami has been a friend and supporter of *Manushi* since the very first issue. She came into contact with *Manushi* as a student at the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. She returned to Nepal after finishing her studies. Since then, she has been involved with the democracy movement in Nepal. In this article, she gives an account of women's role in that movement from a leftist viewpoint. We would welcome other viewpoints and more detailed accounts of the current situation. This piece combines information from an article she sent as well as two of her later letters written while she was underground."

# **Survey on Women's Position In The Party/ Army/ Fronts**

**Central Women's Department,  
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)**

**Command .... Region .... District .... Other ....**

## **I. Personal Data**

- a) Party name .....
- b) Age .....
- c) Education .....
- d) Caste/ethnicity .....
- e) Married/ unmarried .....
- f) Children .....
- g) Class status: capitalist/ feudalism/ rich peasant/ middle peasant/petty peasant/poor peasant/ semi-proletariat/ proletariat .....

## **II. Organisational Data**

### **1. Present status in**

- a) The Party .....
- b) The Army .....
- c) The Front .....

### **2. Status of cadre**

- a) Whole timer/ Part timer .....
- b) If whole timer, since when? .....

### **3. Organisational background**

- a) If involved in any other Party / organization prior to joining this Party/ organisation, then since when? .....
- b) For how many years have you been in this party/ organisation?...
- c) Which was the entry point when you joined?....Party/ Army / Front
- d) Who inspired you to join this movement?.....father/ mother/ sister/



brother/ husband/ teacher/ other

### **III. The Political Background of the Family**

1. What is the political background of your family?.....Communist/ Congress/Monarchist/Independent/ Other
2. Are other members of your family involved in the movement?  
..... yes/no
- 3.(If married) What is your husband's status in the Party..... / army...../front...../any.....?
4. (If married) Is your workplace near your husband or away from him?

### **IV. Personal Interest/ Experience**

#### **1. What was it that led you to join the movement in the beginning?**

- a) Rebellion against class oppression
- b) Rebellion against sex oppression
- c) Ideological commitment
- d) Circumstantial reason
- e) Other

#### **2. What is your favorite work-field?**

- a) Party
- b) Army
- c) Front/ People's power

#### **3. Which field interests you most?**

- a) Ideological /political work
- b) Organisational work
- c) Military work
- d) Cultural work
- e) Other

#### **4. How much are you satisfied with your present work?**

- a) Fully satisfied
- b) Moderately satisfied
- c) Unsatisfied

#### **5. What do you like most in this movement/ organisation?**

- a) Political commitment
- b) Sense of devotion and sacrifice
- c) Equality between men and women
- d) Correct mass line
- e) Other

#### **6. What do you hate most in this movement/ organisation?**

- a) Confusion in ideological/political line

- b) Contradiction between theory and practice
- c) Inequality between men and women
- d) Individualist tendency
- e) Sexual exploitation
- f) Other

**7. Who is your favorite woman leader in the international communist movement?**

- a) Jenny Marx
- b) Rosa Luxemburg
- c) Clara Zetkin
- d) Nadezda Krupskaya
- e) Alexzandra Kolontai
- f) Chiang Ching
- g) Other
- h) Don't know

**V. Gender Related Questions**

**1. To what extent do you experience gender discrimination within the organisation?**

- a) Extreme
- b) Normal
- c) None existent

**2. Which is the field where gender discrimination is most rampant?**

- a) Party organisation
- b) Army
- c) Front organisation/People's power
- d) None existent

**3. Do you feel women are being discriminated when it comes to promotion?**

- a) Most of the time
- b) Sometimes
- c) Never experienced

**4. Do you feel women are distrusted in the course of giving them responsibility?**

- a) Mostly
- b) Sometimes
- c) Never felt

**5. After marriage what kind of changes do you see in women's revolutionary spirit?**

- a) Increases

- b) No difference
- c) Decreases

**6. What are the main problems faced by married women?**

- a) Overt or covert pressure exerted by husband
- b) Problem of bringing up children
- c) Negligence by the organisation
- d) Reproductive health problem
- e) Other

**7. What is the best method of marriage?**

- a) Love marriage
- b) Marriage arranged by the Party
- c) Marriage arranged by the parents
- d) Other

**8. What outlook is most prevalent in the question of women?**

- a) Feudal conservatism
- b) Capitalist consumerism
- c) Proletarian egalitarian
- d) Other

**9. What level of sexual exploitation is prevalent within the Party?**

- a) Extreme
- b) Normal
- c) None existent

**10. Regarding Relationship Between Women**

**i. Within the organisation what level of pettiness do you see amongst women?**

- a) High
- b) Normal
- c) Not seen

**ii. If seen then what are the main reasons behind this? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a) Differences in ideological/political outlook
- b) Prevalence of jealousy and competitive feelings
- c) Tendency to look down upon women
- d) Attempts made by men to bring division within women
- e) Other

**VI. Pertaining to Health/ Mental Problems**

**1. Do you feel weaker than men in terms of physical/ mental strength?**

- a) Often
- b) Sometimes
- c) Never

**2. Till now have you ever experienced problems related to women's reproductive health?**

- a) Often
- b) Sometimes
- b) Never

**3. (To unmarried women only)**

**What are the main health problems faced by unmarried women?**

*(Tick in order of preference.)*

- a) Menstruation disturbances
- b) Malnutrition
- c) Dearth of sanitary pads during menstrual period
- d) Other

**4. (To married women only)**

**What are the main health problems faced by married women?**

*(Tick in order of preference.)*

- a) Menstruation disturbances
- b) Malnutrition
- c) Dearth of sanitary pads during menstrual period
- d) Dearth of appropriate family planning measures
- e) One sided burden of bearing family planning measure
- f) Unwanted pregnancies
- g) Child health problem
- h) Other

**5. How sensitive are men towards women's specific health problems within the organization?**

- a) Highly sensitive
- b) To some extent
- c) Not at all

## **VII. Organisational Problems**

**1. What are the main problems faced by women inside the Party.**

*(Tick in order of preference.)*

- a) Problem of developing ideological and political level
- b) Problem of developing leadership in women
- c) Problem of patriarchal outlook which does not recognise women's leadership
- d) Problem of safety when alone
- e) Problem of meeting family members

f) Other

**2. What are the main problems faced by women in the people's army? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a) General tendency to see women as weak, incapable people
- b) Tendency to doubt their capacity hence hesitation to send them for offensive operation
- c) Problem of inferiority complex inherent in women
- d) Lack of training compatible to their specific health built up
- e) Problem of continuity
- f) Problem of meeting family members
- g) Contradiction between necessity and capability
- h) Other

**3. What are the main problems faced by women in the United Front? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a). Low participation in the united front
- b). Tendency not to accept women's leadership in the united front
- c). Problem of politicisation and militarisation
- d). Contradiction between necessity and capability
- e). Other

### **VIII. Methodology to Solve the Problems**

**1. What measures should be taken in order to increase women's participation in the movement? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a) Women should be accepted as the basic revolutionary force for the revolution
- b) Special rights should be guaranteed for women in the organization
- c) Wives and family members of leaders should be politicized
- d) Sexual oppression should be seriously eliminated
- e) Special measures must be taken to safeguard women cadres
- f) General sensitisation regarding women's specific problems should be imparted
- g) Other

**2. In order to develop leadership quality of women what are the main measures to be undertaken? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a) Provision for periodic ideological, political classes
- b) Provision for military classes
- c) Special preference must be given to women when promoting
- d) All kinds of hesitations must end while delegating military & non-military responsibilities
- e) Special drive to establish women's leadership in the Party, army and front should be conducted periodically

- f) Put an end to traditional sexual division of labour
- g) Other

**4. What all measures should be taken in order to guarantee women's continuity in the movement? (Tick in order of preference.)**

- a) Care must be taken to continuously increase ideological and political level
- b) Sensitisation of women's specific problems
- c) Give main responsibility to husband for adopting family planning measures
- d) Provide community based child-care center
- e) While allotting work-place women's needs should be specially addressed
- f) Meetings with family members should be arranged regularly
- g) Encourage remarriage of martyrs' wives
- h). Other

## **IX. Miscellaneous**

**1. (For family of martyred)**

**After husband's martyrdom what problems are you facing? (Tick in order of preference)**

- a) Problem of raising children
- b) Economic problem
- c) Problem of protection from the Party
- d) General unsafe feeling
- e) Other

## **Note**

*This form is directed to those whose Party status is Area Committee or above; whose army status is Commander, Vice-Commander of Section or above; whose mass front/united front status is District Committee Member or above.*

## Appendix – 2

Table No. – 1  
1. PERSONAL DATA

Age		Education Level		Marital status		Children		Caste/ ethnicity		Class status		Class categorisation	
Yrs.	%	Level	%	Status	%	Status	%	C/E	%	C/S	%	Status	%
<=18	36.93	Illiterate	2.27	Married	26.48	Yes	55.26	B/C/N*	38.33	Capitalist	0.17	Rich	0.52
19-25	46.69	Literate	13.07	Unmarried	70.56	No	42.1	TBG**	49.3	Feudal	0.35	class	
26-35	12.2	<=5	14.81	No. ans.	2.95	No ans.	2.64	Madhesi	0.35	Rich-	1.22	Middle	42.68
36-50	2.27	5 -10	47.56	Total	100%	Total	100%	Dalit	7.32	peasant		class	
>50	0.17	10 -12	15.5					Others	0.7	Middle-	37.6	Basic	53.32
No ans.	1.74	>12	0.87					No ans.	4	peasant		class	
Total	100%	No ans.	5.92					Total	100%	Petty-	3.83	No ans.	3.48
		Total	100%							bourgeois		Total	100%
										Poor peasant	41.29		
										Semi-proletariat	6.45		
										Proletariat	5.58		
										No ans.	3.48		
										Total	100%		

\*Bahun/Chhetri/Newar

\*\*Tibeto-Burman Group

Table No. – 2  
**II. ORGANISATIONAL DATA AND III. POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FAMILY**

Present status in Party/ army/mass front or united front			If whole-timer, since when?		What is the political background of family?		If married what is the status of husband in Party/army/front ?			Work-place near or away from husband?	
Field	Status	%	Year	%		%	Field	Status	%	%	
Party	AC*	75.98	Before 1990	0.17	Communist	77.7	Party	AC	38.96	Together	43.42
	DC**	20.48	After 1990	1.39	Congress	7.14		DC	48.05	Not	
	RC***	2.36	After 1996	81.37	Monarchist	2.61		RC	3.9	together	30.93
	CC****	1.18	No ans.	7.07	Independent	6.1		CC	9.09	No ans.	25.65
	Total	100%	Total	100%	Other	1.57		Total	100%	Total	100%
Army	SEC	65.02			No ans.	4.88	Army	SEC	47.92		
	PL	24.63			Total	100%		PL	33.33		
	CM	9.85						CM	10.42		
	BN	0.49						BN	8.33		
	Total	100%						Total	100%		
Front	DC	94.98					Front	DC	76.48		
	RC	1.42						RC	11.76		
	CC	4.6						CC	11.76		
	Total	100%						Total	100%		

\*Area Committee \*\*District Committee \*\*\*Regional Committee \*\*\*\*Central Committee

SEC=Section PL=Platoon CM=Commander BN=Battalion



**Table No. – 3**  
**IV. INTEREST/EXPERIENCE/ PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

What lead you to join PW ?		What is the most attractive aspect in PW ?		What is the most dis-tractive aspect in PW ?		Who is your most favorite international women leader?	
	%		%		%		%
Rebel against class oppression	64.98	Political commitment	29.09	Confusion in pol./ ideological line	30.32	Jenny Marx	35.19
Rebel against gender oppression	16.2	Devotion and sacrifice	36.01	Contradiction in theory and practice	18.12	Rosa Luxumberg	18.81
Ideological commitment	9.08	Equality between men and women	21.95	Inequality between men and women	9.76	Clara Zetkin	4.88
Circumstantial reasons	6.45	Correct mass line	10.45	Individualist tendency	22.82	Nadezhda Krupskaya	2.26
Other reasons	1.57	Other reasons	0.35			Alexandra Kolontai	1.04
No answer	1.74	No answer	2.09	Sexual exploitation	12.54	Chiang Ching	13.07
Total	100%	Total	100%	Other reasons	2.26	Others	0.87
				No answer	4.18	Don't know	17.77
				Total	100%	No answer	8.01
						Total	100%

**Table No. – 4**  
**GENDER RELATED QUESTIONS**

What is the level of gender discrimination within the organisation?		Do you feel discriminated during promotion?		After marriage any changes in women's revolutionary spirit?		Which outlook is most prevalent in judging women?		What is the level of sexual exploitation in the organisation?		What is the level of animosity between women in the org.?	
	%		%		%		%		%		%
Extreme	3.66	Mostly	5.75	Increases	10.8	Feudal conservatism	32.58	Extreme	4.18	Extreme	8.71
Normal	74.56	Sometime	61.32	No change	44.25			Normal	48.61	Normal	78.22
None	20.91	Never	27.87	Decreases	35.89	Capitalist	5.68	None	42.68	None	10.28
No ans.	0.87	No ans.	5.06	No ans.	9.08	consumerism		No ans.	4.53	No ans.	2.79
Total	100%	Total	100%	Total	100%	Proletarian	45.64	Total	100%	Total	100%
						egalitarian					
						Other					
						No ans.					
						Total	100%				

**Table No. – 5**  
**VI. HEALTH/MENTAL PROBLEM**

Do you feel physically/ mentally weaker than men ?		What are the main health problems faced by unmarried women?		What are the main health problems faced by married women?		How sensitive are men towards women's specific health problems?	
	%		%		%		%
Often	8.88	Menstrual disturbances	64.45	Menstrual disturbances	44.08	Highly sensitive	12.37
Sometimes	67.25					To some extent	74.56
Never	21.95	Malnutrition	7.65	Malnutrition	12.5	Not at all	5.75
No answer	1.92	Dearth of sanitary	21.97	Dearth of sanitary	9.21	No answer	7.32
Total	100%	pads		pads		Total	100%
		Other reasons	1.73	Dearth of family	15.79		
		No answer	4.2	planning material			
		Total	100%	One sided burden of family planning measure			
				Unintended pregnancy			
				Child health problem			
				Other reason			
				No answer			
				Total			

**Table No. – 6**  
**ORGANISATIONAL PROBLEMS**

Main problem faced within the Party		Main problem faced within the Army		Main problem faced within the United Front	
	%		%		%
Problem of ideological/ political upgradation	64.11	Assuming women as weak and vulnerable	25.78	Low participation in united front	46.69
Leadership development	7.77	Doubting women's military offensive capabilities	18.12	To ignore women's leadership in united front/mass front	18.81
Patriarchal outlook regarding women's leadership	6.27	Women's inherent inferiority complex	19.16	Problem of politicisation and militarisation	14.29
Problem of safety when alone	4.53	Lack of appropriate training for women	7.49	Gap between necessity and capability	13.41
Problem of meeting family regularly	2.44	Problem of continuity	9.06	Other	0.7
Other reasons	1.22	Problem of meeting family	1.57	No answer	6.1
No answer	3.66	Gap between necessity and capability	6.1	Total	100%
Total	100%	Other	0.35		
		No answer	12.37		
		Total	100%		

**Table No. – 7**  
**VIII. METHOD FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS**

Measures to increase women's participation in PW		Measures to develop women's leadership quality in PW		Measures to guarantee women's continuity in PW	
	%		%		%
Accept women as basic revolutionary force in PW	58.54	Arrangement of periodic ideological/political classes	63.94	Increase ideological/ political level	64.63
Guarantee special rights in the organisation	15.85	Provision for military classes arranged periodically	5.92	Sensitisation about women's specific problems	14.46
Politicise family members of leaders	7.49	Special preferences given while promoting women	4.7	Husband should adopt family planning measure	2.44
Eliminate sexual oppression	5.75	No hesitations in delegating military/non-military work	7.14	Provide community based childcare centers	2.26
Special measures to safeguard women cadres	2.61	Establish women's leadership in Party/army/front	8.54	Address women's needs while allotting work	2.62
Impart sensitisation of women's specific problems	5.92	End to traditional sexual division of labour	5.4	Regular meeting arranged with family members	1.04
Other reasons	1.74	Other reasons	0.35	Encourage remarriage of martyrs' wives	1.92
No answer	2.09	No answer	4.01	Other reasons	0.35
Total	100%	Total	100%	No answer	10.28
				Total	100%

# **CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR POLITICAL EVENTS AND MILITARY RAIDS DURING 10 YEARS OF PEOPLE'S WAR**

**(February 13, 1996 to February 13, 2006)**

## **Year 1996**

· 13 February: The historic initiation of protracted people's war in Nepal.  
First Plan- "Let us march towards the direction of founding new democratic system against reactionary state."

First slogan: "March along the path of people's war to smash the reactionary state and establish a new democratic state!"

First propaganda raid on Small Farmer's Development Programme of the state-owned Agricultural Development Bank in Chyangli in Gorkha district. Another simultaneous raid on the Holeri police outpost in Rolpa district, Athbiskot police outpost in Rukum district and Sindhuligari police outpost in Sindhuli district.

· 19 February: Press statement by General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Com. Prachanda taking responsibility for the initial actions of the people's war.

· 27 February: Reactionary police kills child student Dil Bahadur Ramtel in Gorkha district. He attains glorious first martyrdom of the people's war.

· 28 February: Reactionary police kills 6 Khatri brothers at Pipal in Rukum.

· June: Second Plan starts. Slogan: "Let us develop guerrilla war in a planned way!"

· 5 October: Annihilation of police sub-inspector Yam Bahadur K.C. in a raid. He had been accused of planning Com. Rambrikshya Yadav's assassination, at Sabaila in Dhanusha district.

## **Year 1997**

· 3 January: One of the most daring acts since the initiation of the

people's war. People's army's first successful raid on the Bethan Police Post of Ramechap district.

At least 4 policemen killed. 3 people's army combatants including Commander Com. Tirtha

Gautam and Com. Dilmaya Yonjan attain glorious martyrdom during the process. 4 pieces of 3-0-3 rifles with 65 rounds bullets, and other ammunitions seized.

- June: Central Committee meeting of CPN (Maoist) adopts Third Plan of people's war with the slogan: "Let us take the guerrilla war to a new height of development."

- September: Revolutionary guerrillas raid police patrol troupe in Kalikatar, Tanahun district and seize weapons.

### **Year 1998**

- February: First successful ambush against reactionary police force in Dhumlewa forest of Taksera, Rukum.

- 14 June: Raid on Riot Police Base Camp at Laha in Jajarkot district.

- May: Reactionary government starts malicious police operation "Operation Kilo-Sera-2" with the aim: "Kill all, destroy all, burn all and loot all"

- August-September: The fourth extended meeting of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) successfully held. Party brings out new slogan for new situation: "Advance in the Great Direction of Creating Base Areas!"

- 27 October: Phalate police Post in Kavre successfully raided and captured. Police outpost in Nirmalbasti, Parsa raided and captured. Police outpost in Lalia in Dhanusha raided and captured.

### **Year 1999**

- 3 January: Bhattedanda Police Post in Lalitpur successfully captured and all weapons seized on the occasion of the first successful police post raid in Bethan on 3 January, 1997

- 23 January: Pathivara Tower at Jhimpe in Salyan district captured. Police Post Mugrhaa, Sukariyaa in Kalikot district captured.

- 23 April: Gualichour Police Post in Baglung district captured.

- 2 May: Maoist guerrilla's Special Task Force capture riot police base camp in Janbang, Rolpa.

- 10 May: 3 No. Naka Police Post in Pabanghat, Kalikot district captured.

- 22 May: Takukot Area Police Office in Gorkha captured.

- 28 May: Kanaka Sundari Police Post in Jumla captured.

- 4 June: Money action on local branch of Nepal Bank Ltd. in Khimti, Ramechhap.
- 11 June: Police outpost in Odanakhu Padam, Jumla captured.
- 14 June: Commando Police Post in Laha, Jajarkot captured.
- 30 June: Pauwa police post in Machhae V.D.C of Kavre district raided.
- 8 September: Heroic martyrdom of Com. Suresh Wagle (Com. Basu) (Alternate PBM). He was the highest ranking member of the party to be martyred during the course of the three and half years of the people's war.
- 21 September: STF of people's army raid the Riot Police Striking Base Camp in Mahat village of Rukum district. More than half a dozen of riot police killed. DSP Thule Rai and others surrender. 27 Rifles and several ammunitions seized. No loss on the side of revolutionaries.
- 25 September: Raid on Bhadaura, Police Post in Kavre district.
- 10 August: First frontal battle with Police at Kotabada in Kalikot district.
- 27 October: Raid on area police post at Falate in Kavre.
- 2 November: Raid on Namdo police post at Sagartara in Dolpa.

## **Year 2000**

- 2 January: A commando police post raided in Raralihaa, Jumla district.
- 8 January: A police post raided in Samari, Nuwakot. Three policemen killed. Some rifles, ammunitions together with bulletproof jackets captured. From the revolutionary side a commander got martyred during the operation.
- 26 January: A commando police post raided in Rampur, Salyan district.
- 20 February: A heroic raid on Riot Area Police Base Camp in Ghartigaung in Rolpa.
- 13 March: Raid on Area Police Office in Bhengri in Pyuthaan.
- 24 March: Raid on Police post in Dhurkot in Gulmi.
- 2 April: A Riot Area Police Base Camp raided in Taksera (Upper Sera) in Rukum.
- 5 April: A Police Post raided in Takma in Rukum.
- 13 April: Harmi Bhanjyang Police Post in Gorkha raided by STF of people's army. 10 rifles, 4 pistols and large quantity of ammunitions seized.
- June: Initiation of sixth plan of people's war. Special "shock" programme.



- 3 July: Riot Police Base Camp in Panchkhatia Jajarkot raided.
- 23 August: A police post successfully raided in Dhawadi, Nawalparasi. One policeman killed and three 3-0-3 rifles, seven other rifles and large quantity of ammunitions seized. No loss on the side of the revolutionary force.
- 30 August: An area police office raided in Mahavari, Jhapa. All rifles and ammunitions which consisted of five 3-0-3 rifles, one pair of Chinese pistols, 364 pieces of bullets seized. This is also the first time that such a raid has been conducted in the easternmost part of Nepal whose border adjoins Eastern India.
- 31 August: A forest office with armed forces successfully raided in Mrigaulia of Morang. All arms and ammunitions seized.
- 24 September: First attack on a district headquarters. Dunai of Dolpa district raided. 14 police force killed, leaving 40 of them injured. The people's armed forces storm into district prison and free 17 prisoners. People's army seizes heavy arm and ammunitions and also captures Rs. 50 million Nepalese currency. 2 revolutionary combatants attain glorious martyrdom in the process.
- 26 September: A daring raid on the Bhorletar area police office in Lamjung, killing 8 policemen and leaving 3 policemen injured. A nearby Agricultural Bank also raided.
- 7 November: An area police office raided in Doramba, Ramachhap.
- 20 December: First people's government formed in Rukum.

## **Year 2001**

- February: The second national conference of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) was successfully concluded. It adopted "Great Leap Forward: An Inevitable Need of History", the historic document presented by Chairman Comrade Prachanda. The conference passed the party's ideological and political line, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and Prachanda Path.
- 30 March: Successful jailbreak by 7 revolutionary women comrades in Gorkha district.
- 1 April: A daring raid on Riot Police Base Camp in Rukumkot, Rukum.
- April: Raid on Riot Area Police Base Camp in Naumule, Dailekh.
- April: Riot Area Police Base Camp in Mainapokhari, Dolakha raided.
- June: Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA) is formed.
- 1 June: Royal Massacre. The entire royal family of king Birendra is

killed by his brother Gyanendra and company.

- 6 July: Successful raid on Area Police Office in Bichaur in Lamjung. All arms and ammunitions seized by revolutionaries.

- 12 July: Successful military raid on Police Base Camp in Holeri in Rolpa. 71 policemen taken into custody.

- 30 August: First round of negotiation with reactionary old state starts.

- September: The historic first national convention of United Revolutionary People's Council (UPRC) is convened in the base area in the western region of Nepal.

- September: The historic first national convention of People's Liberation Army (PLA) is successfully convened in the base area in the western region of Nepal.

- 14 September: The second round of negotiation takes place.

- 13 November: The third round of negotiation takes place.

- 21 November: Chairman Comrade Prachanda issues a public statement announcing the end of the negotiation process.

- 23 November: The biggest and most successful military operations to date in Ghorahi, Zonal headquarters of Rapti Zone and district headquarters of Dang and Narayanpur Bazaar of the same district. PLA attacks a well-fortified barrack and arms depot of the reactionary Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) with cent percent success. 14 RNA men including a Major and 11 policemen are killed. 7 PLA comrades attain glorious martyrdom. About 450 pieces of arms including 99 SLR, 12 SMG, 12 GPMG, several rocket launchers and mortars as well as a large quantity of grenades and bombs seized.

- 23 November: Another big and successful military strike on the district headquarters of Syangja district, Syangja Bazar. 14 policemen are killed and over a dozen injured. No casualty on the PLA side. About 150 pieces of arms, including about a hundred rifles and a large quantity of ammunitions are seized. About 50 million rupees worth cash and gold etc. were recovered.

- 25 November: District Headquarter of Solukhumbu district successfully raided by PLA. RNA is successfully blocked. 33 policemen, 4 RNA men and 2 government officers get killed. 15 PLA comrades attain martyrdom. 200 pieces of arms including 125 rifles, a huge quantity of ammunitions are seized. About 50 million rupees recovered.

- 7 December: Unsuccessful raid on Ratamate Repeater Station in Rolpa district.

- 8 December: Unsuccessful raid on Kapurkot Repeater Station in Salyan district.

## **Year 2002**

- 6 February: A heroic military strike on the area police office in Bhakundebeshi, Kavre district. 16 policemen killed and dozens seriously injured. All arms and ammunitions seized by the PLA.

- 16 February: Military raid on the area police office in Lalbandi, Sarlahai.

- 17 February: A valiant military operation in Malganshen, the district headquarters of Aacham district and Sanfebagar airport of same district. 55 RNA personnel, 77 policemen and half a dozen of old state's civil officers are killed. 24 PLA combatants attain glorious martyrdom during the process. All sophisticated weapons and ammunitions seized by the PLA.

- 18 February: A successful military attack on Sitalpati Police Station in Salyan District leaving 32 policemen dead. All weapons seized by the PLA.

- 11 April: A daring military strike on the base camp of Armed Police Force in Satbaria, and Police post in Lamahi of Dang district. 34 armed personnel killed and remaining hundred are injured. All arms, ammunitions and logistics consisting of 90 SLR, 3 LMG, 3 SMG, 59 3-0-3 rifles, 7 Magnums, 17 pistols and revolvers, 8 Shot Guns, and 48 hand grenades are seized.

- 2 May: First Frontal Battle with RNA in Lisne hill in Tewang of Rolpa district.

- 7 May: A daring military raid on well-fortified Army Base Camp (which was designed by American military engineers) in Gam of Rolpa district. 31 RNA personnel were killed. Negligible PLA casualty. All arms and ammunitions were captured.

- 27 May: Raid on Army Base Camp in Khara, Rukum, but unsuccessful.

- 30 May: Frontal battle with RNA patrol in Damachour, Salyan. 7 RNA personnel killed.

- 15 June: Glorious martyrdom attained by Comrade Rit Bahadur Khadka (Com. Pratap), alternate Central Committee member, who was shot by the enemy in Rautahat district.

- 8 September: A successful military strike on the Armed Police Office in Bhiman of Sindhuli district, which left 49 army personnel dead and more than three dozens injured.

- 10 September: A big military strike on Sandhikharka, the district headquarters of Arghakhanchi. 81 royal mercenaries (17 RNA and 64

Police personnel) were killed. The PLA captured huge cache of arms and ammunitions consisting of 1 piece of rocket launcher, 9 pieces of LMG, 2 pieces of 2-inch Mortar, 36 pieces of SLR, 72 pieces of 3-0-3 rifles, 15 pieces of MMG, 4 pieces of Shotguns, 5 pieces of Magnum, some grenades, 2 pieces of 2-2 rifles, Mouser, 12 pieces of pistols, 6 pieces of revolvers, 173 pieces of ammunitions. 48.5 million Nepalese currency and about 15-20 kg gold.

- 27 October: Military raid on Airport Security (RNA) Base Camp in Rumjatar in Okhaldhunga, but unsuccessful.

- 14 November: The PLA raids Area Police Office in Takukot in Gorkha district. The PLA force seizes 37 rifles.

- 14 November: Hundreds of PLA forces raid Khalanga, Jumla, Zonal Headquarters of Karnali Zone (security bases, regional police unit and district police office from all sides of Khalanga). 33 policemen, 4 army men, including chief district officer killed. 3.8 million worth cash and large quantities of arms and ammunitions seized. 15 PLA combatants attain glorious martyrdom.

- 4 December: Successful military attack on Area Police Office and Nepal Bank Ltd. local branch in Lahan in Siraha. Half a dozen policemen killed. 2 PLA combatants attain martyrdom.

- 18 December: Successful military attack on Koilabas Police Post in Dang district. 6 Policemen killed and 8 injured.

## **Year 2003**

- 3 January: Successful ambush on royal mercenaries in Kusum, Banke district leaving 6 policemen dead and 14 injured.

- 4 January: Successful ambush on RNA patrol in Gawar, Banke district. 2 RNA personnel and 3 policemen killed.

- 25 January: Krishna Mohan Shrestha, IGP of Armed Police Force, killed.

- 28 January: Ceasefire declared by CPN (Maoist) and old state.

- 31 January: Declaration of the negotiation team led by Com. Baburam Bhattarai. Other team members include Com. Ram Bahadur Thapa (Com. Badal), Com. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Com. Dev Gurung and Com. Matrika Yadav.

- 28 March: Members of the negotiation team make public appearance.

- 2 April: Massive mass meeting conducted in Kathmandu.

- 27 April: First round of negotiation takes place at Hotel Shanker in Kathmandu.

- 10 May: Second round of negotiation at the same place.

- 16 July: Third round of negotiation takes place at Hapure in Dang district.
- 16 July: Doramba massacre (where 19 Maoist cadres and one civilian killed brutally by RNA in Ramechhap district).
- 20 August: Comrade Candra Prasad Gajurel (Com. Gaurav) arrested by the Indian security forces from Chennai airport.
- 27 August: Break down of seven month long ceasefire. Chairman Prachanda makes an announcement to this effect through public statement.
- 26 August: RNA Colonel Kiran Basnet, who was directly involved in killing innocent people, Maoist sympathisers and cadres, is annihilated in Kathmandu in broad daylight by PLA commando; another Colonel Rabindra Chhetri, chief of the army psychological warfare department, is seriously wounded.
- 13 September: First Frontal Battle with RNA in Sahajpur in Kailali. 41 RNA mercenaries killed, more than 2 dozens seriously injured and two military trucks blown-up. One platoon Commander is martyred and few injured on PLA side.
- 23 September: Frontal Battle with RNA in Goganpani, Doti. 9 RNA and one truck driver are killed on the spot. One PLA fighter (Section Commander of 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn.), gets martyred.
- 23 September: Frontal Battle with RNA in Kerabari, Doti. Significant losses on RNA side.
- 29 September: PLA raid on Kalyanpur Police Post in Saptari district. 4 policemen killed and an equal number injured. 5 PLA fighters attain glorious martyrdom.
- 10 October: Unsuccessful raid on Armed Police Base Camp in Kusum with significant losses on PLA side.
- 12 October: A heavy raid on Armed Police Training Camp in Bhaluwang, Dang killing 25 royal mercenaries. Significant quantity of arms including 14 SLR, 1 LMG, and 5 × 3-0-3 rifles seized. More than 1 dozen PLA combatants attain glorious martyrdom.
- 15 October: Road ambush on RNA in Gaira of Ghanteshower in Doti. 21 RNA personnel killed and dozens seriously injured. 10 SLR with 21 magazine, 3 SMG with 17 magazine, 1 LMG and 8 magazine, 21 pieces of M-36 grenades, 7.62 mm-1000 Rds, 9mm-500 Rds, 2 pieces of hand set, and 7 pieces of fighter bag seized by PLA.
- 27 October: Ambush on commando police in Chyangli in Gorkha. SP Surya Kumar Shrestha and 4 others policemen killed.
- 15 November: A Brigadier-General Sagar Bahadur Pande and 3 other

RNA personnel are blown up in a mining ambush near Bhaise (Pandrang of Nebuware) in Makwanpur.

- 15 November: Historical victory on frontal battle with RNA in Nakedanda, Khiratadi in Bajhang district. 12 RNA personnel killed and 15 were seriously injured. The PLA managed to seize large quantity of sophisticated weapons including 3 pieces of SLR, 1 LMG's barrel with 8 magazines, 1 GPMG's barrel, 20 pieces of binoculars and other logistics. One PLA Comrade Prakash attained martyrdom during the process.

- 18 November: Successful road mining at Kanepokhari of Morang. 11 APF men killed and 4 wounded.

- 1 December: A heavy frontal battle with Unified Command (RNA+APF+Civil Police) in Khumidi, Pandaun in Kailali district. 15 RNA men killed and 35 injured. The PLA also manages to seize 4 SLRs with 5000 rounds of ammunitions and 20 magazines, one piece of M-16's magazine, 10 pieces of GPMG magazine, 4×3-0-3 rifles, one magnum rifle, one communication set and a stack of different ammunitions and others logistics. 7 PLA comrades get martyred in the process including battalion commander Com. Prahar and 2 Company Commanders Com. Kushal and Com. Sameer.

- 3 December: Road ambush on RNA in Aitbare Ramite in Morang. 4 RNA mercenaries met their ignominious death.

- 13 December: A fierce encounter takes place with Unified Command at Pachhawang of Rolpa in which more than 10 RNA soldiers are killed. Four comrades including Com. Vivek, battalion commissar, attain glorious martyrdom in the process.

- 14 December: Successful road mining on RNA in Jaleswor-Bardibas Highway in Mahottari.

- 17 December: Successful road mining and subsequent frontal battle with RNA in Dhankhola, and Shivaghari in Kapilvastu district.

## **Year 2004**

- 2 January: Four RNA personnel killed in an ambush near Mariahari along Hetauda-Narayangarh Highway.

- 3 January: 25 RNA recruits killed in an ambush and subsequent encounter in Narayangarh-Mughling Highway near Jalbire, Chitwan. The PLA also meets with an irreparable loss in the martyrdom of Com. Salim (Battalion Commander) in that action.

- 5 January: A big encounter takes place at Khotang, in which half a dozen royal mercenaries get killed, several automatic weapons seized.

· 9 January: Magarat Autonomous Region People's Government is declared.

· 16-18 January: Successful military strike in Ramite of Morang in which more than 20 RNA mercenaries are killed and several others wounded.

· 18 January: Major frontal battle with RNA at Dhangarhi-Dadeldhura Highway of Dadeldhura district (far-western region). 13 royal mercenaries are killed on the spot, 7 wounded and 5 captured. The PLA is successful in seizing four pieces of M-16 rifles with several magazines, 2 chains of GPMG and numbers of bullets.

· 16 January: Tamang Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 19 January: Bheri-Karnali Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 24 January: Madhesh Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 29 January: Sati-Mahakali Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 29 January: Tharuwan Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 30 January: Tamuwan Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 1 February: Kirat Autonomous Region People's Government formed.

· 8 February: Com. Matrika Prasad Yadav, PBM of CPN (Maoist) and alternate CCM Com. Suresh Ale Magar are arrested by the Indian police forces from Delhi and stealthily handed over by the night to the royal regime in Nepal.

· 21 February: A major battle (14 hours long) with the RNA at Aiselukhara of Khotang district. One dozen RNA personnel dead and two dozens seriously injured. 6 PLA combatants also get martyred.

· 22 February: Powerful mine explosion on Unified Command along Ghorahi-Lamahi Road in Dang district. 2 RNA and one APF mercenaries are killed and 18 others injured.

· 24 February: Successful road ambush on RNA at Laxmipur of Masotkhola in Dang and Suraikhola in Kapilbastu district. At least 10 APF personnel get killed and more than two dozens wounded. The PLA seizes weapons and ammunitions.

· 2 March: A heroic military raid on the headquarters of Bhojpur district. The PLA captures the base camp of telephone repeater station. More than 30 security personnel are killed and two dozens injured. The

PLA seizes all weapons including INSAS, SLR, and AK-47.

· 20 March: One of the biggest and successful military action on Beni, headquarters of Myagdi district. PLA raids a well-fortified barrack and arms depot of the reactionary RNA and unified command. More than 150 royal mercenaries are killed. 7 PLA comrades attain glorious martyrdom. About 250 pieces of weapons including INSAS-16, SLR-39, SMG-23, LMG-03, Mor-01, Shot gun-11, Chinese Pistols-32, several rocket launchers and others important ammunitions are seized.

· 26 March: Comrade Mohan Baidhya (Com. Kiran, in-charge of the Eastern Command) is arrested by Indian Police forces from Siliguri.

· 3 April: PLA successfully raids Yadukuwa Police Post in Dhanusha district. 9 Policemen are killed and 20 injured. 40 weapons including 24 rifles seized.

· 6 April: PLA raid on Area Police Office of Pashupatinagar in Ilam district killing 4 policemen and keeping 64 in custody. 46 weapons (including 33 × 3-0-3 rifles, 6 revolvers, 5 Chinese made pistols and 2 shotguns and cash over 20 million rupees.. seized.

· 9 May: 7 RNA personnel and 1 policeman killed when PLA launches an attack at Mainapokhari in Kabhre VDC in Dolkha district. 6 PLA combatants are also injured in the attack.

· 13 May: Comrade Nep Bahadur K.C., CCM of CPN (Maoist) and Commander of Mangalsen First Brigade is killed in an internal accident.

· 19 May: 18 RNA recruits are killed in an encounter at Ghantishore of Doti district.

· 19 June: 14 APF personnel are killed in a PLA ambush which is followed by an encounter at Rangisng Chisapani of Gobardiha VDC in Dang district. 4 APF personnel get injured in this incident.

· 05 July: 12 policemen are killed in a PLA ambush at Bahuarwa Bhatha along Padam road (10 km west of Birgunj) in Parsa district.

· 05 July: 12 Unified Command personnel (11 RNA and 1 APF) killed and 10 injured in an encounter at Gangate Dhobighat (Kalimati Kalche area) in Salyan district. Some PLA combatants attain glorious martyrdom in the clash.

· August: Central Committee meeting of CPN (Maoist) adopted the new resolution-"Make the first plan of strategic offensive successful, prepare rigorously against foreign intervention".

· 5 September: Comrade Sherman Kuwar (Com. Bishal, CCM and Commissar of Bethan Memorial Fifth Brigade) and CCM Comrade Mohan Chandra Gautam (Com. Kumar) are killed by Gyanendra's butcher security forces in Siraha district.



- 30 October: PLA raid on Gamgudi, headquarters of Mugu district.
- 16 November: Successful and historically significant ambush and subsequent encounter with RNA at Krishnabhir along Prithvi Highway in Dhading district. 7 RNA personnel killed and 5 injured. The PLA manages to seize a dozen weapons and logistics. Comrade Lakhan attained martyrdom during the process.
- 16 November: The PLA successfully raids Mahendranagar police post of Dhanusha district.
- 17 November: 8 RNA mercenaries are killed in an ambush. All weapons are captured by the PLA.
- 20 November: One of the most daring frontal battle with Ranger forces of the RNA at Pandaun forest in Kailali district. 19 RNA men are killed on the spot and 2 dozens injured. The PLA seizes 6 pieces of M-16 American rifles. 10 comrades attain glorious martyrdom during the clash.
- 20 November: Inaugural ceremony of Nuwagaun-Thawang-Chunwang Sahid Marg (road) project.
- 15 December: One of the fiercest frontal battles with RNA at Siddhara in Arghakanchi district. 22 RNA men are killed on the spot and half a dozen killed later. More than 2 dozens get seriously injured. The PLA seizes more than 3 dozens of modern weapons.
- 18 December: A heroic daylight raid on Area Police Office at Sankhu in north-east Kathmandu. 4 policemen are killed and half a dozen injured. The PLA seizes all rifles and ammunitions. No casualty on PLA side.
- 19 December: A successful daylight raid on Area Police Office of Hetaunda in Makwanpur. One policeman is injured. All weapons are seized by the PLA.
- 19 December: 9 RNA personnel are killed and dozens injured in an encounter with RNA in Kharidhunga of Dolkha. 3 PLA combatants attain martyrdom in the clash.
- 22 December: 15 RNA personnel are killed in a big frontal battle at Chishapani Bridge along Kailali-Bardia Border. The PLA manages to seize more than a dozen modern weapons and ammunitions.

## **Year 2005**

- 1 January: 20 RNA personnel killed and half a dozen wounded in a PLA ambush at Sautikhola of Dhankuta district. All weapons seized by PLA.
- 19 January: 21 RNA personnel killed in a PLA ambush which is followed by an encounter at Puwa Khola in Ilam district.

- 24 January: PLA raids Haripur Area Police Office of Sarlahi district.
- 26 January: 6 RNA men including one Major killed and equal number injured in an ambush at Bhaplekhola along Pokhara-Baglung Highway in Parbat district. All arms are seized by PLA.
- 29 January: Big encounter with RNA in Suklaphanta in Kanchanpur.
- 30 January: Frontal Battle with Unified Command at Chisapani in Dhanusha.
- 9 February: A daring jail break at Dhangadi in Kailali. 130 prisoners freed by the PLA.
- 13 February: First radio speech through *Janaganantra Radio* (People's Republic Radio) by Chairman Com. Prachanda on the occasion of 9<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the people's war.
- 13 February: Intensive frontal battle with RNA+ APF at Jante in Morang.
- 20 February: Raid on Area Police Office, Dhanusha, Mahendranagar.
- 22 February: Ambush against Unified Command at Jhumsa along Siddhartha Highway.
- 31 March: Encounter with RNA in ChipleBhanjang in Okhaldhunga.
- 7 April: A raid on army base camp at Khara in Rukum.
- 9 April: The PLA captures Charikot, district headquarters of Dolkha by blocking the RNA.
- 9 May: Raid on army base camp at Bandipur in Siraha.
- 10/11 May: 22 RNA personnel killed in a raid in Narke and Ghartichhap in Kavre.
- 22 June: 8 RNA personnel killed in frontal battle at Pandhare in Bhojpur.
- 25 June: Frontal Battle with RNA at Kandaha in Arghakanchi leaving 19 RNA recruits dead.
- 7 August: Military raid on the army base camp at Pili in Kalikot district. More than 70 royal mercenaries (17 RNA and 64 Police) are killed and 64 captured. The PLA captures big cache of arms and ammunitions.
- September: The historical Plenum of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is concluded.
- 17 September: CPN (Maoist) declares 3 month long unilateral ceasefire.
- 22 November: CPN (Maoist) and seven parliamentary political parties conclude 12-Points Understanding.
- 1 December: The royal army kills Com. Sunil alias Com Kim Bahadur Thapa, Division Commander of People's Liberation Army and popular

mass leader, at Jinabang in Rolpa district.

- 3 December: CPN (Maoist) extends the period of ceasefire by one month.

## **Year 2006**

- 2 January: Break down of four month long unilateral ceasefire by CPN (Maoist).

- 11 January: A daring raid on Area Police Office at Kailali, Dhangadi.

- 14 January: The PLA storms simultaneously into the police check posts at Thankot (Kathmandu) and Dadhikot (Bhaktapur), right at the periphery of the capital Kathmandu. 14 policemen including one Inspector are killed in these two attacks and all arms and ammunitions captured by PLA. This is the first major attack in the Kathmandu valley by the PLA after the breakdown of the four-month-long unilateral ceasefire.

- 20 January: Heroic commando raids in various parts of Nepalgunj Municipality in Banke district. B.P. Chock base station and Jamunaiha police post (check post near Nepal-India border) completely destroyed. At least 6 armed policemen are killed. The PLA seizes 11 weapons. At least six policemen get killed and three others injured

- 21 January: a major encounter takes place with a 300 strong RNA force (with ranger battalion) at Jhurijhure in Phaparbari (Makawanpur). In one of the longest exercise of positional warfare extending over 19 hours, the valiant PLA fighters successfully repulsed the RNA mercenaries, killing 64, injuring more than 50 and capturing thousands of rounds of ammunitions and other equipments. 26 PLA fighters with battalion assistant commissar Com. Kalyan, company Commander Com. Rabin, company Vice Commander Com. Shikhar attain glorious martyrdom during the process

- 1 February: Military strikes on Tansen, district headquarters of Palpa, leaving 47 of Gyanendra's security personnel dead, nearly 2 dozens injured. In this attack an army armory factory, district headquarters of reactionary's administration, district police office, residence of chief district officer are completely destroyed. Following the attack, the PLA seizes a huge amount of modern weapons and other ammunition consisting of SLR, SMG, INSAS, LMG, 3-0-3 and other important logistics etc. The CDO and others are taken into the custody of the PLA and released later. 129 prisoners are set free from the district jail. Eight PLA combatants attain glorious martyrdom and some injured during that clash.

- 6 February: Selected forces of eastern division of PLA attack on RNA in Uadypur where 6 RNA are shot and more than 20 injured. The PLA force manages to seize 10 rifles including 2 SLR, 2 INSAS, 1 SLW, more than 1 thousand bullets and other ammunition.

- 6 February: A valiant military raid takes place at Panauti in Kavre by selected forces of third division of PLA. 17 RNA personnel including unified command forces are killed and one RNA soldier surrenders with his INSAS rifle.

- 6 February: A major military attack on district headquarters of Dhankuta by first division of Peoples Liberation Army. 6 enemy forces of unified command killed and more than dozens injured.

- 9 February: An ambush and subsequent vicious fighting with RNA at Rambhapur, in Sunwal along Sunwal-Butwal section of the Mahendra highway Nawalparasi. 25 royal mercenaries are killed during fierce clashes; the PLA seizes various sophisticated automatic weapons (81 mm cannon one and its bomb 10, LMG one, M-16 with TTS 4, two, 2 inch mortar and its bomb 15, heavy machinegun, 50 thousands of bullets, and 50 military bags), and torch four heavy army trucks during the clash.

- 13 February: Countrywide celebration of ten years of People's War.